Tool 11: NetMapping

Aim of the tool

To help people understand, visualize, discuss, and improve situations in which many different actors influence outcomes.

When to use it?

Issue Exploration and Shared Language. This tool can be used at all stages of an MSP. Not only when you plan an intervention but also to give insight whether certain goals have been achieved.

What is NetMapping?

Net-Map was developed by IFPRI to help understand and visualize how stakeholder goals work outin an MSP. This tool helps stakeholders to determine which actors are involved in a given network,how they are linked, how influential they are, and what their goals are. It is a hands-on social networking tool.

Net-Map merges characteristics of two existing methods: social network analysis and the power mapping tool. Using a participatory approach, both interviewees and interviewers draw a networkmap of the actors involved in the policy arena and characterize the different links between the actors. They then add "influence towers," made of checkers pieces, to transfer abstract concepts of power and influence into a three-dimensional form. Finally, the interviewee assesses the goal orientation of the different actors.

Why Net-Map?

Ultimately, the tool provides an influence network map of the governance situation as well as qualitative and quantitative data about the perceived power and influence of the actors. The tool islow tech and low cost; it can be used with rural community members who have little formal education as well as with policymakers or international development actors.

Watch the IFPRI introduction video at https://netmap.wordpress.com/about/

NetMapping - Step by step

Materials needed for a Net-Map session are:

- Flipchart paper to draw the map;
- Adhesive paper ("post-its") or tape to write the names of actors
- Flat round stackable discs for building influence-towers (e.g. checker's pieces, bicyclespare parts) Alternatively: stones or beans
- Actor figurines (different board game figures, optional but especially useful when workingwith illiterate interviewees).
- Markers of different colors to draw the links between actors.

1. Preparation:
   · Define question (e.g. "Who can influence the success of our project?").
   · Define links (e.g. giving money, disturbing someone, giving support, giving command)and assign different colors to the links (i.e. giving money = red link).
   · Define goals (e.g. environmental orientation and development orientation or pro andcontra a change of legislation).
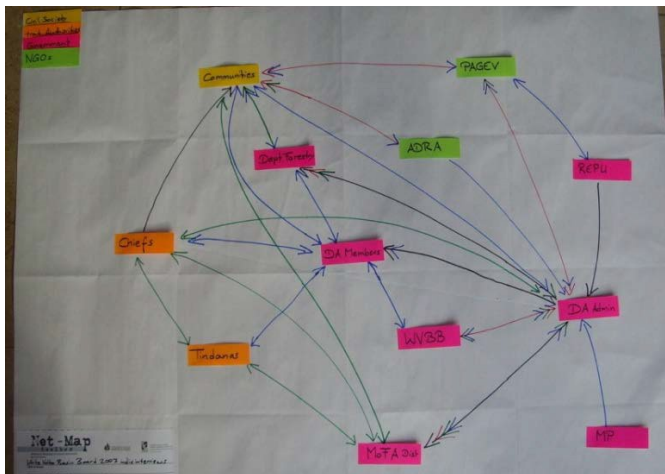   · Decide who should be involved in interviews/discussion.

2. Actor selection:
   · Ask: "Who is involved in this process?"
   · Write names on actor cards and distribute on empty Net-Map sheet.
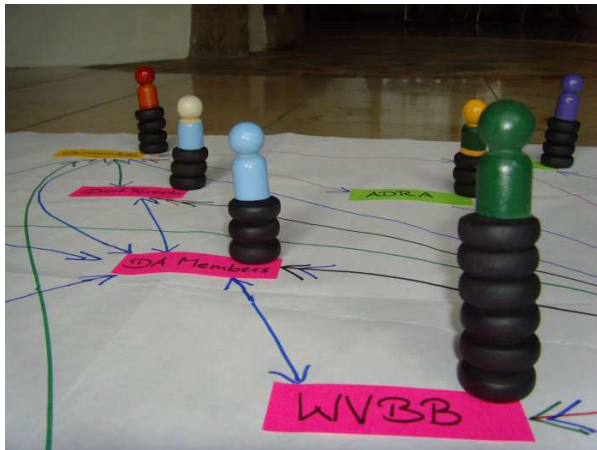
3. Drawing of links:
   · Ask: "Who is linked to whom?" Go through the different kinds of links one by one (e.g."Who gives money to whom? Who disturbs whom?").
   · Draw arrows between actor cards according to interviewees directions.

If two actors exchange something (e.g. information) draw double headed arrows. If actors exchange more than one thing, add differently colored arrow heads to existing links.
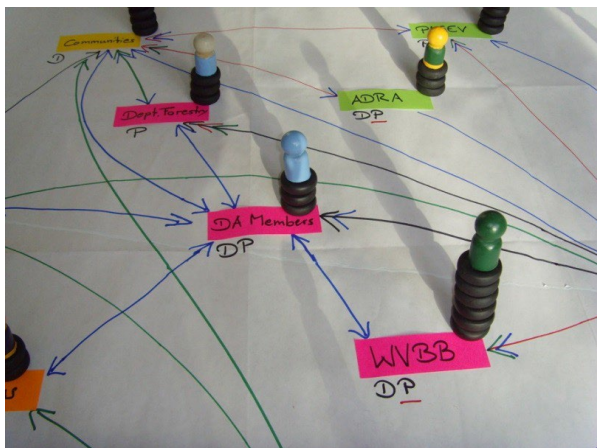

4. Influence Towers
   · Ask: "How strongly can actors influence xy?"
   · Explain/agree on a definition of influence with your interviewee, clarify that this is aboutinfluence on xy and not influence in the world at large.
   · Ask interviewee to assign influence towers to actors: The higher the influence on the issueat stake, the higher the tower (or alternatively, the more stones or beans). Towers of different actors can be of the same height. Actors with no influence can be put on groundlevel. Towers can be as high as interviewees want.
   · Place influence towers next to actor cards.
   · Verbalize set-up and give interviewee the chance to adjust towers before noting height oftower on the Net-Map (important for documentation purpose).

5. Goals

- Ask according to pre-defined goals, actor by actor, e.g. "Does this actor supportenvironmental, developmental goals or both?"
- Note abbreviations for goals next to actor cards, allow for multiple goals where appropriate, by noting more than one goal next to the actor (see picture below).

6. Discussion

- According to specific goal of your Net-Map exercise, discuss what this network means for strategy of organization, where influence comes from, what happens in case of conflictinggoals etc.

Learn more

Schiffer, E. (IFPRI) (2007). Net-Map English Manual:
https://netmap.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/net–map–manual–long1.pdf

Schiffer, E. (IFPRI) (2008). Net-Map training slide show:
https://netmap.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/net–map–tool–pool–seminar–14th–may–08small2.pdf