



A hands-on social networking tool: Net-Map

Complex policy problems call for complex solutions that require the involvement of multiple stakeholders. For example, both developing and developed countries have instituted multistakeholder water governance bodies on local, national, and international levels. Yet a lack of appropriate research tools for the analysis of complex governance systems has made it difficult to assess and improve the effectiveness of these systems. In response, IFPRI has created an innovative empirical research tool—Net-Map—to deconstruct complex relationships and priorities within complex governance systems and multistakeholder situations.

Initially developed to better understand water governance bodies as part of the Water and Food Challenge Program, Net-Map helps stakeholders gather in-depth information about governance networks, the goals of actors, and their power and influence. Net-Map provides a means for users to collect qualitative and quantitative information that is structured and comparable on a multistakeholder network. It can be used both as a research tool and as an instrument for organizational development and strategic network planning. The tool's flexibility allows for its use at the community, national, and international levels.

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 network map 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.

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 is low 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.

Net-Map was developed to work in the White Volta River Basin Board in rural Ghana in an effort to more clearly visualize the interactions between individuals and networks that revolve around its 17 members, which include district officials, NGOs, and representatives from the research sector. The Board has ambitious environmental goals for the region but little decisionmaking and enforcement capacity.

The research output from the Net-Map project may be found in the IFPRI discussion paper, "Tracing Power and Influence in Networks: Net-Map as a Tool for Research and Strategic Network Planning"

(www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/publications/ifpridp00772.pdf) and in a recent article in *Development in Practice* (www.developmentinpractice.org/apc_ae-v19n1x544045.html).

Outcomes

- IFAD used Net-Map to examine the local governance network of water user groups and to map out local power asymmetries in Ghana.
- In Mali, IFAD used Net-Map to help project staff identify, understand, visualize, and discuss possible ways to effectively implement perimeter irrigation villages as part of a broader project on land and water governance <netmap.wordpress.com/2009/01/20/moses-abukari-writes-sharing-net-map-among-development-practitioners/>.
- IFAD researchers presented and shared their experience using Net-Map at the Rome Share Fair, organized by the Rome-based agencies: Bioversity International, CGIAR ICT-KM program, FAO, IFAD, and WFP in January 2009. <www.sharefair.net/programme/programme-search/submission-result/en/>.

- IFPRI, the World Bank, and WHO used Net-Map in a food safety project in Uzbekistan to conceptualize institutional analysis findings and sketch out the dynamic value chain for the dairy sector. The project team also used Net-Map with a group of six small-scale dairy producers, processors, and traders to better understand the farmers' perceptions of who influences the safety of dairy produce and to what extent information flows between actors in the milk supply chain. The exercise gave the project team a comprehensive picture of the functions and contributions of each actor along the chain.
<netmap.wordpress.com/2008/04/04/food-safety-in-the-dairy-supply-chain-in-uzbekistan/>.
- Net-Map has been used in course curricula at the Governance and Conflict Research Group at the Center for Development Research (ZEF) in Bonn, Germany.
<netmap.wordpress.com/2009/01/08/jennifer-hauck-teaching-and-learning-learning-and-teaching/>
- The postdoctoral fellow who developed Net-Map was awarded the CGIAR's Most Promising Young Scientist award in 2008. CGIAR described Net-Map as "a new approach to understanding complicated social situations, such as those that involve conflicts over natural resources."
- Several organizations have provided a link to Net-Map from their websites, indicating this tool's widening influence:
 - www.comminit.com/en/node/279861;
 - democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/node/277;
 - vivmcwaters.com.au/category/evaluation/;
 - governance.developmentgateway.org/Content-item-view.10976+M51d7ab69480.0.html;
 - www.durantlaw.info/Network+Analysis+Hunger+and+Poverty;
 - <http://www.fullcirc.com/wp/2008/03/18/speaking-of-social-network-mapping/>
- Finally, IFAD has placed Net-Map on their Water Program website under "Tool Sheets."
<www.ifad.org/english/water/innowat/>

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