

## Wednesday Meeting 9 February 2011 Method Exchange Platform Nadia von Holzen introduces Net-Map

Our first meeting of the year was a great success thanks to Nadia von Holzen. Close to twenty motivated and energetic folks met at Résidence Colladon, Petit Saconnex to learn about Net Map. Nadia had mentioned this method some time earlier as one she might want to use as her organisation but she had not yet had a chance to put it to action, so she agreed to facilitate the session as one of our a Method Exchange evening. In preparing for the session Nadia had warned that "Time will be short (as always); so we might not manage to go through all the steps. And as I never did it before I cannot judge how much time the steps need; I would say the actors are fast analyzed; the connections as well; after that it will get interesting." And it did.

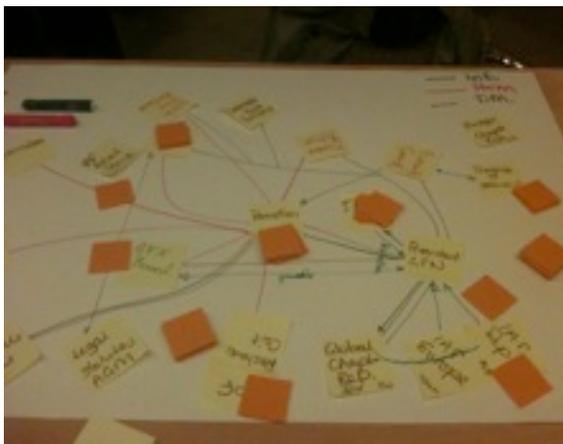
The objectives of the session were to

- Allow Nadia (right) to see how it would work,
- Identify specific challenges she may have to be aware of
- Learn how she may have to adapt it for her organisation.
- Introduce the method to others who might be interested in using it.



The session opened with a soft shoe shuffle. The idea is for one person to step into the middle of the circle and make a statement about their expectations of the evening. Everyone else must make a step towards them if they agree and away from them if they disagree. Nadia modelled the first attempt and we each followed her with different people making statements. We were all very soon laughing shuffling around the room until one person said 'let's start' and everyone agreed! The ice was certainly broken.

We made sure that everyone had introduced themselves as we had one or two new faces, and we also welcomed the newest Geneva CPFs: Christiane Amici Raboud, Christine Zeigler and Raj Rana.



Nadia introduced us to Net Map. According to Wiki pedia Net-Map toolbox is a social network analysis tool that uses interviews and mapping to help people understand, visualize, discuss, and improve situations in which many different actors influence outcomes. Social Network Analysis is a research approach used by scholars such as S.D. Berkowitz, Stephen Borgatti, Ronald Burt, Linton Freeman, Mark Granovetter, Nicholas Mullins, Anatol Rapoport, Stanley Wasserman, Barry Wellman, and Harrison White to better understand the implications of the position of individual actors in a social structure.

Individuals create Influence Network Maps using materials from a physical toolkit. The kit includes small figures that represent different actors. Lines are drawn to link the actors and reveal how they are connected or not connected, and "influence towers" are built to reflect the relative power of each actor (the higher the influence tower, the greater the influence).

Photos displaying Influence Network Maps are available on the Net-Map blog: <http://netmap.ifpriblog.org>.

### The Method

We didn't have the fancy kit so we used post its for people and Nadia provided small squares of orange foam to build 'towers of influence'

We used as our issue Moving from GFN to IAF Geneva. Nadia introduced the overall process

#### Step 1 – Preparation

- Issue
- Key Questions
- Links to identify
- Support of goals

**Step 2 Actor Selection:** Who is involved in GFN?

**Step 3 Drawing links:** Who is linked with whom?

**Step 4 Influence towers:** How influential are the actors?

**Step 5 Supportive of goals:** Which goals do the different actors support

**Step 6 Discuss the results:** What does the analysis mean for GFN

#### Observations from the method

As with all facilitated events the crucial part is in having the group identify the 'focus question'. We discussed quite vigorously whether we should have only one very clear and limiting focus question which all the groups responded to or should the over arching question of 'how do we move GFN to IAF Geneva' identify several 'issues' which then could be addressed in parallel, especially in larger groups.

We concluded the usual answer in social science: "It depends" And indeed it does. It depends on the complexity of the issue you are dealing with and the size of the group working on the issue. People saw benefit in both approaches.

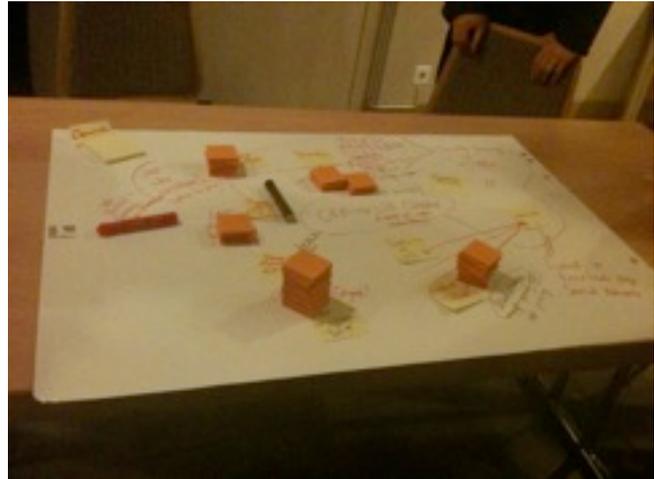


Several of us were familiar with other stakeholder analysis tools that also help identify influence, but almost everyone concluded that this method was particularly engaging and fun. Everyone was fully immersed in the activity It immediately lost any stigma sometimes associated by some more left brain thinkers of games, while at the same time exploiting the advantages of a game: creativity, informality, out of the box thinking. It also was very

physical so the kinaesthetic people were very happy. Some groups stood others sat around the table. There was general activity and buzz around the room.

Each group was given a piece of flip chart paper, some coloured markers, and the tower blocks of foam. WE had predetermined some of the key links and colour coded them – communication, information and decision.

We worked for about 30 minutes and then each group simply described where they were in their analysis. Some groups had stayed within the perceived remit of analysing the current situation for its actors and links and influence, while others got terribly excited and moved quite quickly onto solutions and recommendations.



### Our learning

As the various outputs indicated this method like many others can develop into quite different paces if not managed carefully. Some of the lessons shared included:

1. Be very clear about the focus question and the expected output or deliverable from the group
2. Even for some seemingly simple issue it might be useful to limit the group work to specific steps, introducing the task step by step, e.g. "First identify the actors. Now when we are sure that we have identified all relevant actors start to make the links."

### Would we use it?

We agreed unanimously that we enjoyed this method and could imagine using it sometime in the future. Check out the websites below for more information and photos of the actual Net Map toolkit



Remember you can get information about all our meetings and workshops for 2011 on [www.gfn-net.ch](http://www.gfn-net.ch).

The Geneva Facilitator Network will soon be applying to change its status as an IAF Chapter and will become IAF Geneva. You can register and sign up as a member of IAF through the website [www.iaf-world.org](http://www.iaf-world.org).

Members of IAF will automatically become members of the IAF Chapter and benefit from discounts and access to information and learning. You can still attend our local meetings as non member by paying the higher non member rate.

For Net-Map; it was developed by Eva Schiffer, more details on Eva and the tool:

<http://netmap.ifpriblog.org/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net-Map\\_Toolbox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net-Map_Toolbox)