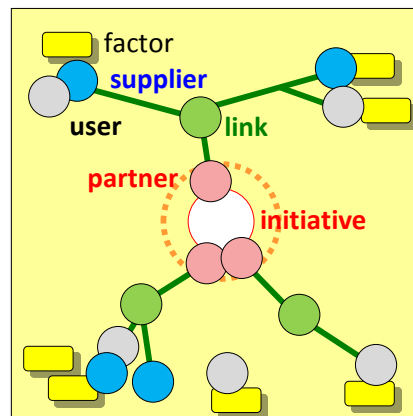# The Network Analysis

focuses on involvement

The Network Analysis puts an initiative in the middle

This model takes the perspective of people who join forces to realise an initiative. For realising an initiative a variety of actors is involved. The way in which they are involved will differ. The Network Analysis draws a map that allows for prioritising relationships to work on.

Actors are involved in different ways

Crucial factors in the success of an initiative are represented by those who adopt different positions of involvement:

- Users will benefit from the initiative.
- Suppliers are required to contribute.
- Partners feel ownership towards the initiative
- Links connect partners to suppliers and users.

Some questions which need to be answered are:

- What is the initiative?
- What is needed?
- Who should be involved?
- Who can make connections?
- Which connections should be improved?

The Network Analysis visualises positions of involvement. Actors can be involved in different ways, and some essential links might be missing. This analysis helps to identify priorities for strengthening links.

Making a Network Analysis
The model can be used for brainstorming about what relationships should be strengthened. Then follow the following steps:

1. **The Initiative** is placed in the centre, since this is the reason for the existence of the network. An initiative reflects an ambition. In the theory of living networks, genuine ambitions are serving the collective good. Money and power are not ambitions but means to an end. "Fundraising" as an initiative is not good enough. In an analysis session a flipchart or a paper table cloth can be used.

2. **Factors that Matter** are placed in a wide circle around the initiative. These are institutions or things that are needed to make things happen. Participants brainstorm all factors they can think of. The ones that really matter will appear later on. It is practical to write on cards, and stick them on the paper.

3. **Actors** who can connect these factors to the initiatives are given a face. Who should move, to realise this initiative? Think of people who represent this factor. Add them to it. The more specific you can be about people (as opposed to organisations), the clearer it becomes who to get involved in the initiative. Actors can have different positions of involvement, depending on the context. You might need someone as a supplier, user, link or partner. Discuss for each actor in what position you need their involvement.

4. **Users** are people who will benefit if the initiative happens. Indicate these actors in the outer circle in black.

5. **Suppliers** are sources (people or institutions) of things required for the initiative. Indicate those actors in the outer circle in blue. Sometimes users can be suppliers as well.

6. **Links** are people who connect the partners with suppliers and users. This is a crucial step in the analysis. Partners cannot connect with all actors in the outside ring (the users) directly. Their effectiveness depends on their relationships with those who can make the connection. Write links on green cards, and indicate what connection they maintain. The quality of the analysis increases when links indicate names of people.

A completed Network Analysis shows:
- The Initiative
- Users served by the initiative
- Suppliers required to deliver something
- Links connecting partners to users and supplies
- Partners who carry the initiative

Expectations are different, and it takes different actions to get all these actors involved. The analysis reveals which connections are weakly developed or missing, and leads to a plan of action.

The boundaries of the network are not fixed
The initiative may require involvement from actors who do not feel a part of it. This notion of a network differs from the common understand of social networks, with members who recognise each other as such.

The Network Analysis brings people into the picture
The FAN Network Analysis is different to other, more common, methods for actor analysis or power field analysis. It is different in that it takes the initiative as the point of departure, rather than institutional interests or positions of power. Such methods focus on the formal arena where people represent institutions and negotiate about conflicting interests. The network analysis goes beyond the official positions and brings individuals into the picture. Ties can be formal or informal.

Negotiations over conflicting interests are energy consuming, as parties have to compromise their targets to reach agreement (see the Realisation Stage in the Spiral of Initiatives). Informal networking, inspired by ambitions, generates energy because it feeds hope that dreams can come true (compare the Inspiration Stage in the Spiral of Initiatives). Disproportionate focus on power relations and formal interests ignores the importance of the informal process that can really make things move.

> *Origins:*
> *The Network Analysis was developed by Anne Marie Poorthuis (Eigentijdse Verbindingen). Her colleague Lieke Hoogervorst introduced it to the experiment*

"Networks in Livestock Production" (2004-2007) where it appeared to perfectly complement the other tools in use, with their focus on the initiative, energy and connection.

First publications:
Poorthuis, A.M., Bijl, C. van der (2006): *"Van netwerkanalyse naar organisatieroutine" [from network analysis to organisational routine]*. In: Poorthuis, A.M. (red) (2006): *De kracht van netwerkbenadering. (The Power of Network Approaches)*. Assen: Van Gorcum.
Wielinga, H.E., Zaalmink, B.W. et al (2008): *Networks with Free Actors.* Wageningen University and Research.