

ZEFa Disciplinary course: Network Analysis & Power Mapping



Introduction to the Net-Map Tool

by

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<http://netmap.wordpress.com/>

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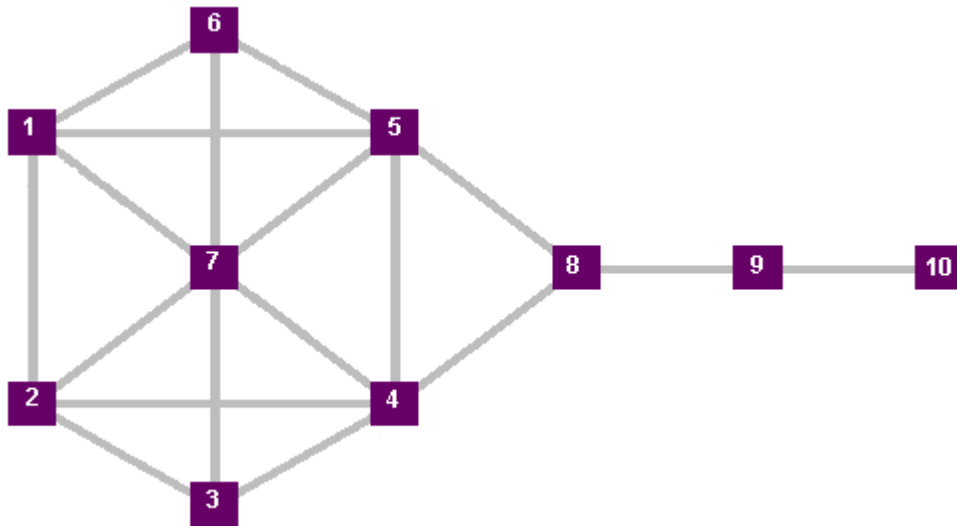
- 1. Introduction to social networks, social network analysis and the Net-Map toolbox**
- 2. Exercise**
- 3. Lessons learned**

What are social networks?

A **social network** is a social structure made of nodes that are tied by relationships and/or flows.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) looks at the social structure.

"Kite Network" developed by David Krackhardt



Problems with classical SNA in development research:

- often computerized
- extractive, exhausting and time consuming
- cultural bias of formulas and theory
- time gaps between data collection and results

Advantages of the Net-Map tool:

- Engages participants in an interactive and visual process and gets people talking and learning from each other;
- Goes beyond the purely structure-driven approach of social network analysis and combines structural measures with measures of attributes of actors (e.g. power or goals);
- The open interview process where inter-cultural differences can be uncovered and corrected throughout the mapping process
- low tech and low cost.

Limitations of Net-Map

- **Even in a network of 20 nodes, there are 190 possible pairs to keep track of. If no methods can be found to simplify the network (e.g. by clustering actors) it is difficult to keep the overview of which links are already drawn and which are yet to be inquired.**
- **Net-Map is a new method and there are no standard procedures how to process the data.**
- **It is still a time-consuming process.**
- **Learning processes of the interview partners are not well understood.**
- **Not applicable in all situations.**

2. Introduction to the exercise

Main research question:

**Who is influencing the research strategy of your organization
and how?**

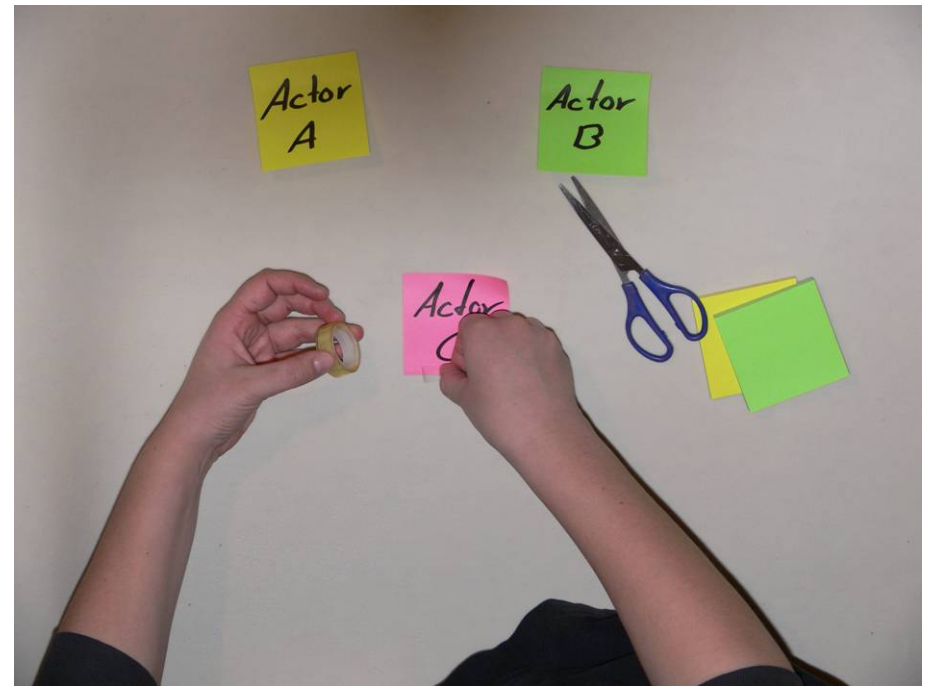
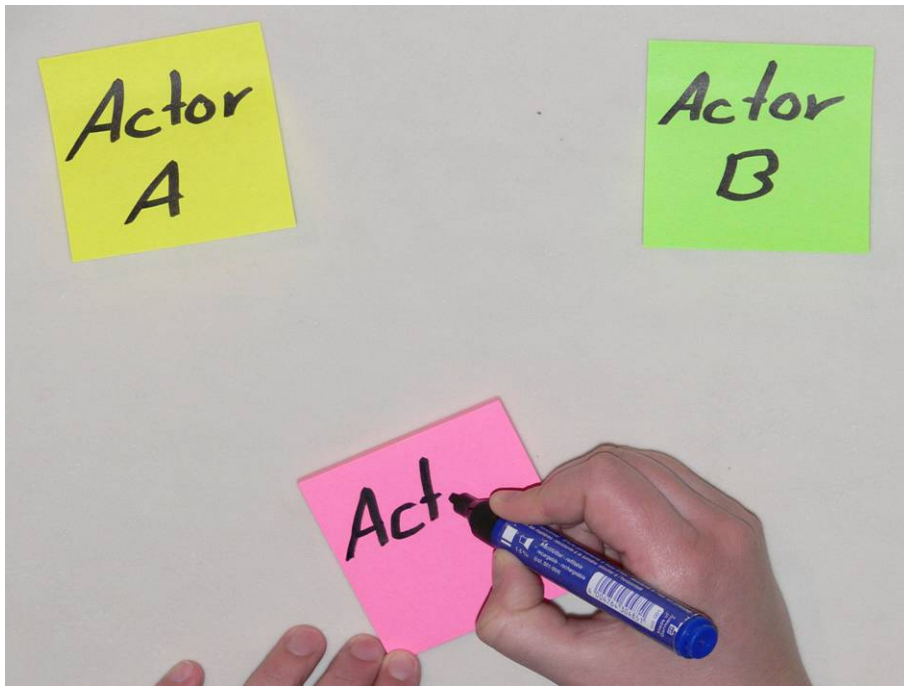
To be discussed in small groups

Materials needed

- large sheets of paper
- small, multi-colored actor cards
- tape to fix the cards on the map
- multi-colored pens
- flat round disks that can be stacked to build influence towers.

Step 1: Ask: "Who is influencing the strategy setting process?"

- Name the five most important actors
- Names are written on actor cards and distributed on the sheet of paper.



Step 2: Ask: “How do the actors influence each other in the strategy setting?”

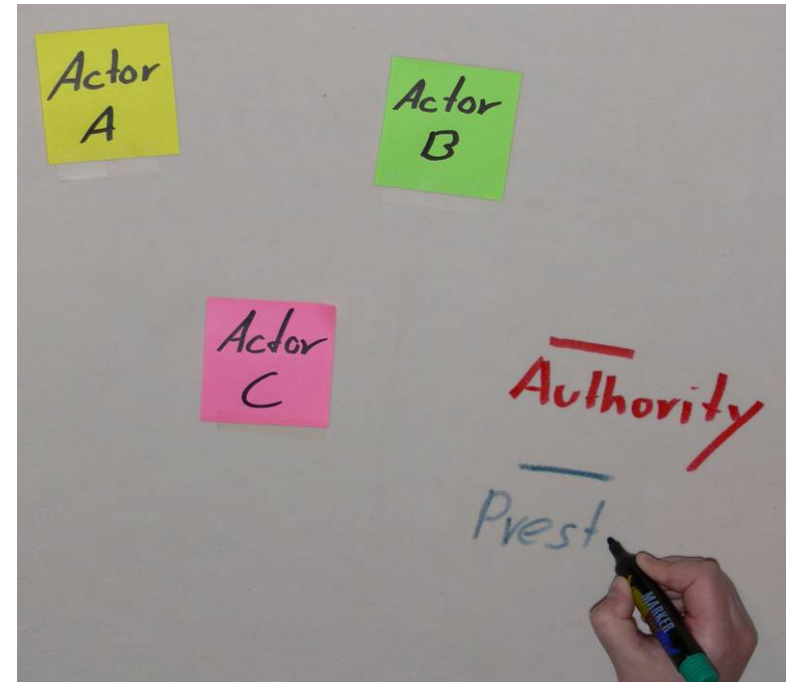
The following links are possible:

- Exert formal authority
- Convince based on good reasoning
- Impress by social status
- Gossip / lobbying
- Other? Please explain:

- Two of the possible links should be selected;

- Legend should be drawn

- Arrows between actors are drawn if on actor is influencing the other.



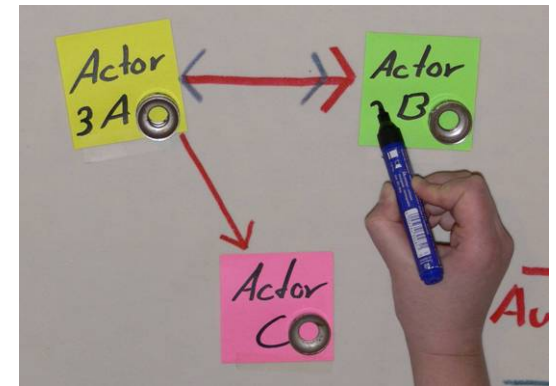
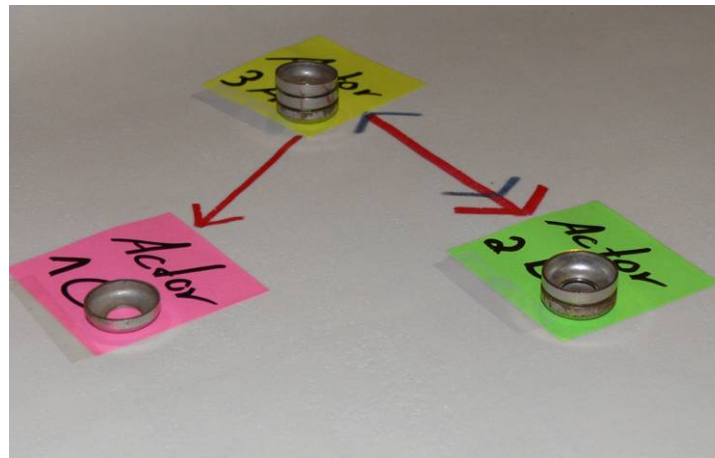
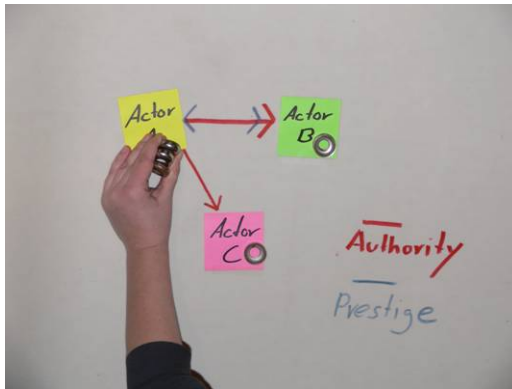
Step 3: Ask: “How strongly can actors influence the strategy setting?”

The height of the influence tower is investigated according to the following rules:

- The higher the influence on the strategy setting, the higher the tower.
- Towers of different actors can be of the same height.
- Maximum height of the tower is five.

Influence towers are placed next to actor cards.

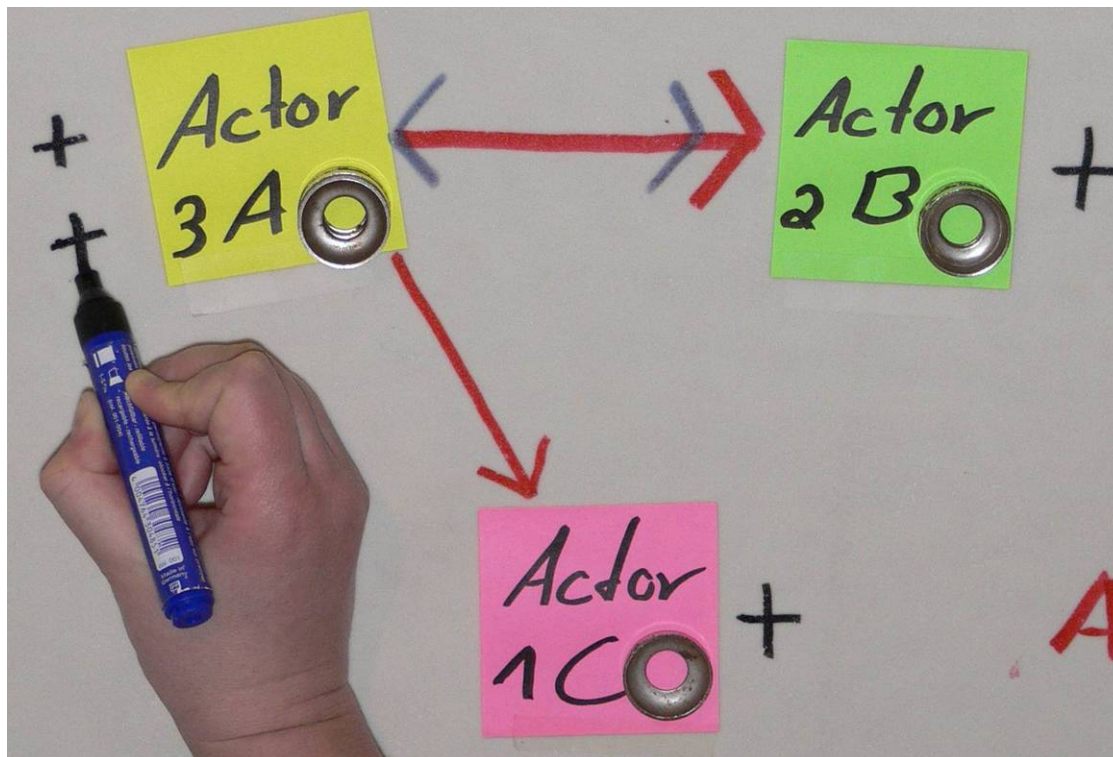
It is noted down on the actor cards how many pieces the assigned tower had.



Step 4 (optional): Ask: What research methods do the actors support?

The different research approaches or methods might be difficult to combine and the different philosophies can make interdisciplinary work quite challenging.

A discussion about the different research approaches of actors might reveal tensions when setting the research strategy, between actors that follow different research methods.



3. Lessons learned

- **Previous knowledge of the research context help to ask the right question and evaluate the usefulness of the answers.**
- **Research question must be clear, e.g. level of analysis or time period of interest should be narrowed down.**
- **Good knowledge of the interview partner is crucial, otherwise the network information remains superficial.**
- **It is a good idea to start the interview process or pre-tests with people you know and who will allow you to access “sensitive” information. However, afterwards it is crucial to broaden the range of interview partner to capture as many different views as possible.**
- **Interviewing people in small, homogeneous groups can be of advantage as they can share information and learn from each other. This process can be very enlightening for the interviewer as well.**

3. Lessons learned

- **A single interviewer may be over-whelmed by the tasks to handle during the interview (interviewing, drawing the network, translating, documenting the process, etc). Too many interviewers may irritate the interview partner. The number of interviewer should be adjusted to the situation.**
- **Information acquired can be quite delicate. Make sure nobody but you has access to the information and disguise the information if you present it and let your interview partner know that you will do so.**
- **If you realize that there is no new information per interview, you could consider to stop the interviewing process.**