

# COLLECTIVE+MIND



**Welcome to Networks in Action!**

We are a team of consultants committed to supporting networks, and the people who work for and with networks, to be more effective and impactful.

- **For networks**, we offer consulting, advisory services, strategic support, and diagnostic assessments to help them accomplish their network's goals.
- **For practitioners**, we offer a community of practice and professional development to build network management skills and capacity.
- **For donors**, and the networks they host and support, we provide advisory services, strategic support, and thought partnership.

We also provide curated thought leadership, co-creation projects, and resources.

## Agenda for today

- Welcome and check-in
- Setting the scene (brief presentation)
- **What?:** Definitions (short breakouts)
- **So what?:** Implications (slightly longer breakouts)
- **Now what?:** Full group identification of key takeaways
- Closing

## Power Dynamics in Networks: What?

### What are the key power dynamics at play within your network?

- Bridging research, policy and narrative change efforts
- Money, licensing
- Dynamics b/w community members who receive services from the network and network members who provide access to the network services/resources, and within network members themselves (supervisors and direct support staff) and between network members and our team (network managers) who hold access to network resources
- Funder/grantee - best case scenario, the funder of the network (which also funds the grantees who participate) wants to be involved to provide TA. Worst case scenario, the funder intimidates grantees
- Different leadership levels within participants (ie. CEO vs front line staff)
- Decision-making in consensus-based subcommittees, staff & member power dynamics, leadership team & staff, network membership/leadership vs host agency
- Participation, respect, esteem

## Power Dynamics in Networks: What?

- We have paid employees who create the communications, the online platform, etc. Most members do not pay to join, so there is no obligation, no legal contract to stay. We have subgroups, called “Circles”. The people in charge of the circles are not members themselves, but either employees or employees or a partner organisation who co-leads the circle.
- Bias of "out groups" definition can vary based on who is in the "in group"
- One of the networks I work with works as a wheel, with my organization in the center, and I'm finding it hard to generate more participation among partners
- Committee leads who get funding, naturally set the agenda. It functions well, but also leave the general coalition members with less responsibility and power.
- Mutuality
- Hierarchical thinking
- Greed, apathy, corruption
- Control over funding and financial decisions

## Power Dynamics in Networks: What?

- Multi-layered, hierarchy-based, gender-based, and race-based
- Many. On a personal level it is about being able to spend time and money in creating and maintaining the network, on a social level it is also about being white and academic.
- Large group facilitation work
- Relationships
- How close you are to the donor
- Paid staff of the network currently is expected to take the lead on ideas, information, making things happen, rather than network members. Organizational leadership from network member organizations don't always share information or opportunities with other staff within network member orgs.
- Global North vs. Global South
- Knowledge and planning of projects
- Power that impacts systemic relationships

## Power Dynamics in Networks: So what?

### What have you tried to do to minimize negative impacts of power dynamics within your network?

- Establish mutually beneficial goals
- Collaboration environment
- We are just beginning to identify and learn more about the negative impacts of power dynamics.
- Not using titles, centered on shared values and vision, intentionally focusing on the expertise and strengths that all participants bring to the work (and are necessary to have to make change)
- We are launching a steering committee to help formalize partner influence in decision making.
- Relationship building, increasing transparency & communication
- Listening
- Coalition building
- Multiple diverse stakeholder group interactions to gain shared understanding of how all contribute to whole system.
- We're trying to be more open and transparent in our relationship building.

### Power Dynamics in Networks: So what?

- We organise a yearly Festival where everyone (members, but also external people) can create their own event (online and onsite) and publish it on our platform. This has worked very well.
- Ask people to slow down and reflect on the situation.
- We have promoted the creation of thematic commissions to generate "management hubs" other than the central one and it's starting to show a good impact
- Collective leadership
- Inspiration, links to policies and strategies, internships, role modelling, groups, networks, knowledge management
- Tried to set up a participatory grantmaking approach
- We try to address it in Meetups, but maybe on a too general level
- Trust and commitment
- To get clarity about the different commitment
- Having champions for different initiatives



## Power Dynamics in Networks: So what?

- We established a Design Team to work to re-design the network and are having a convening to re-engage members. We are working to engage member staff through attending member staff meetings and having open events for members to engage in network design, but some of this still depends on member leaders sharing information internally.
- Opening spaces for conversations about the topic, focusing on hiring people from the Global South.
- Collective meetings
- We've talked about keeping the funder out of the room during some live conversations and to build trusting relationships, we've emphasized the importance of BOTH practice-based expertise from the grantees AND the big-picture view that the funder can offer.
- I've absorbed them, trying to buffer negative impacts between others. This takes its toll on me and also means there's an element of control in this. I say this as a person who tends to bring different people together

## Power Dynamics in Networks:

### Do the power dynamics within your network have positive impacts?

- I think the greatest positive impact would be the influence that exists related to the power dynamics between network members and network managers.
- Yes - it's helpful to leverage power for positive peer to peer influence.
- Having an organization as the sole coordinator (since we are a nested network) makes network coordination and management accountability clear, though this comes with its limitations.
- Having staff means sometimes decisive/efficient action can be taken, which can be beneficial
- Sometimes, in terms of access to resources
- I think that the members are thankful for our willingness to help them. On the other hand, the lack of clarity about how we can concretely help them to connect with each other might be confusing.
- Yes, if we are still aware of each others powers and we are moving towards the direction of our goals (which can be a nonlinear process).
- This dynamic was good for several years but I don't think it's good in the long run
- It seems placing responsibility, funding nad power with select champions is effective in getting work done

## Power Dynamics in Networks

- It gives an opportunity to study different styles of thinking and working and adapt to them to influence outcomes
- Resource-wise (more access to donors) yes, otherwise unsure
- Because we have paid staff, we are able to do more than some other networks. Because we have explicit values around community engagement and equity, we are able to intentionally try to bring everyone to the table.
- When funders encourage grantees to proactively raise questions and when they place value on the grantees' contributions to the Network, the funder's involvement can increase participation.

## Power Dynamics in Networks: Now what?

### What challenges does your network have with power dynamics?

- Unequal access to resources
- Yet to be seen, likely competition mindset
- Most specifically with the power dynamics between community members who access network services/resources and network members who hold access. We also face challenges identifying strategies for incorporating community voice into the collective actions of the network.
- Valuing voices equally within network meetings
- This year we'd like to decentralize leadership and invite partners to share more in decision making and self-organization, though partners often don't see themselves this way, have resources to make that happen, especially when it comes to time.
- Efficient decision-making, equitable decision-making, network boundaries required by the host agency
- Communication and interactions
- Capacity issues
- Structuring power within a group or organization
- Changing mindset about hierarchy

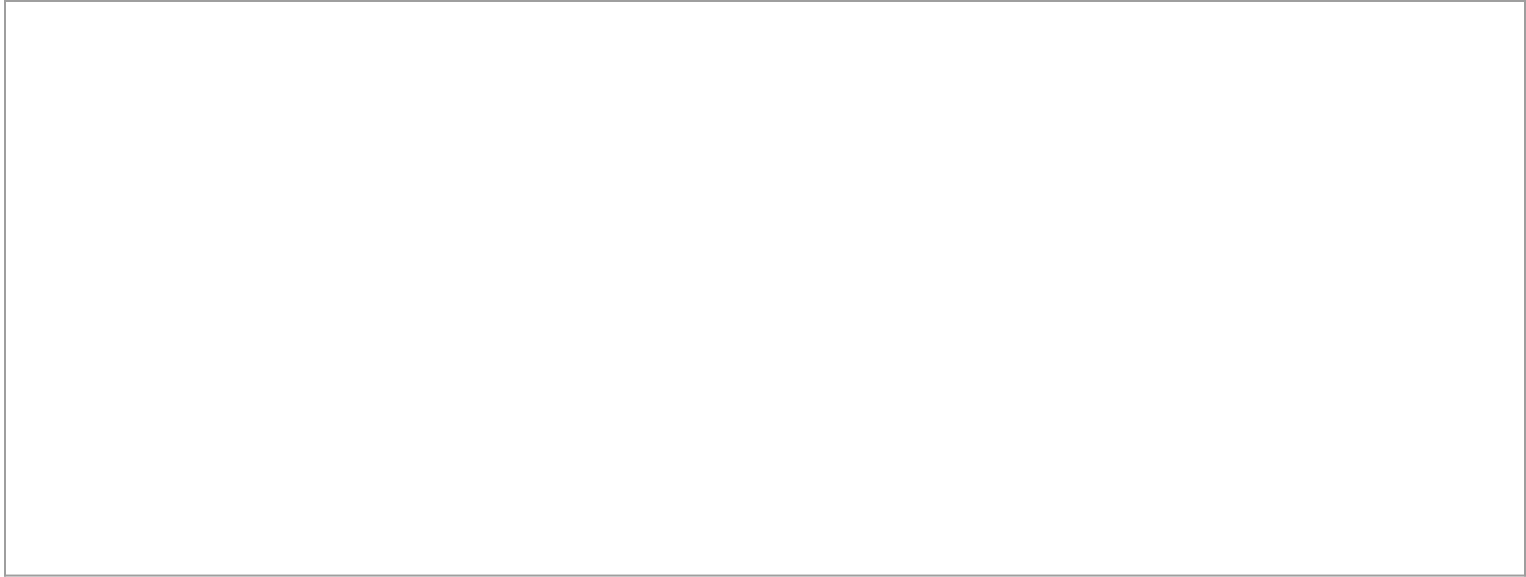
## Power Dynamics in Networks: Now what?

- Hosting conversations where we can provide critical challenge to funders (e.g. about funding practices and focus of resources), while also maintaining strong working relationships as we partner with funders on initiatives
- "This is rather top-down and we wish to create more opportunities for the 300 members to exchange with one another without needing us.
- We wish more people showed up at the drop-ins and when we opened a Discord, not enough people joined either. We are currently looking for the best way to help them connect with one another.
- They don't even see they have it. There's rhetoric that "we share power," "we empower others" But power is not as one-dimensional as giving it up for someone else. There are lots of nuances that can also be particular to each group and their relationship with others/others groups.
- In this particular network I'm struggling to capillarize decisions and management
- powerlessness, overwork
- Access to information technologies (education, electricity, corruption, gender, devices, internet, etc.), greed, apathy
- Calling out and openly addressing them
- Who said it is more important than what is said
- Self-advocacy

## Power Dynamics in Networks: Now what?

- We want to be more open for other perspectives like BIPOC or disabled persons
- Non-intrinsic participation
- Different commitment
- Part of multiple networks, creating a space where people feel comfortable, not led by one institution alone
- Avoiding the power dynamics keeps people away from each other, preventing depth, understanding, relationships and intentional aligned contribution and flourishing. Power dynamics also fosters resentment. Such as when some orgs are funded and some are not yet we are expected to collaborate as 'equals' in inequitable conditions
- Our network is made up of legal organizations that work with communities, but the community organizations are not generally at the table in network discussions.
- Wanting to be community centered and more inclusive to the Global South, but still having most of its team and leadership be from the Global North
- Transparency
- Because the funder can see what's posted on our network website, some grantees are hesitant to raise questions and get the support they need from our network.

## Questions? Reflections?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, occupying the lower two-thirds of the slide. It is intended for users to write their questions or reflections.

## Power Dynamics in Networks: What? (#1)



## Power Dynamics in Networks: What? (#2)

- Money seems to be a strong element in power (funders/ grantees, distribution of funding across network partners, flow of money from one part of the globe to another)... it seems to be automatically “tip the scale” of power dynamics
- Power that shows up in different types of cultural wealth (referencing work by Dr. Tara Yosso)

## Power Dynamics in Networks: What? (#3)

- a question of access: e.g. to food and nutrient / education / privileges
- a systemic situation: e.g. young people and women have less access, (rich/poor, male/female, colour, race, north/south, location, governance / type of passport/ political relationships? Post-colonialism, language, education) : diversity-boxes
- Something to recognize, maybe some are there to be overcome and some will stay or will get replaced if they disappear

## Power Dynamics in Networks: So what? (#1)

- Acknowledge the power dynamics
- Dynamics are always changing
- Transparency of those dynamics might be important to understand group dynamics
- Each group and network build their own power dynamics, but some parts are constructed by society
- It influences the decisions and the process of finding the decisions ← important to reflect.
- Decision-making...
- Trust into power dynamics (“Trust is good, control is better ?!”x/& )

## Power Dynamics in Networks: So what? (#3)

- Productive uses of power - recognizing when power is helpful to move the work forward and when and why there is need to “level power out”
- Some tension can be productive (analogy of when “stress” is good)
- Stopping and pausing, power that might show in moving fast - there’s need to stop and check in (self and group check in)
- Working in multicultural settings, understanding different communication and values - how those impact power
- Feeling the weight of “undoing” power differences that have been in place for centuries - the role that we can play in shifting power (it’s slow work)

## Power Dynamics in Networks: Now what?

- An interesting Bertrand Russell Quote: “The fundamental concept in social science is Power, in the same sense in which Energy is the fundamental concept in physics” For me this means It doesn't disappear, its ever present, dynamic and needs to be constantly negotiated

## How did this go?

Please take our [very brief feedback survey](#) - **thank you!**

# Upcoming Opportunities

## [Introduction to Networks](#) - April 26th at 8am US ET

- Learn about what networks need to be effective and impactful

## [Co-creation Workshops: Research on Donor Funding to Networks](#) - multiple dates

- Hear updates from our recent research and co-create ideas and solutions

## [Introduction to Network Management](#) - May 10th at 1pm US ET

- Join us to learn about and discuss effective network management practices and skills

[Sign up](#) for our bi-weekly newsletter for new content and opportunities!