Learning activity

Relational Mapping

TIME: 90 mins

LEARNING AIMS:

- Develop a relation map of a movement mapping
- Analyse the relational map through network theory and analysing capacity

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 10-50

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Flipchart, markers,

FRAMING:

This learning activity can be carried out as additional activity to the movement mapping (presented in Part 1 “Ecology of social movements”) as an additional layer of analysis. If you have not completed a movement map with your participants, do that before this activity.

FACILITATION:

Step 1. Introduction

After completing a movement map, take an overview of the map. What impressions immediately strike you?

Step 2. Develop a relational mapping

Next, look at your map through the lens of these network theory concepts:

a) Density: Density refers to the "connections" between participants. Density is defined as the number of connections a participant has, divided by the total possible connections a participant could have. For example, if there are 20 people participating, each person could potentially connect to 19 other people. A density of 100% (19/19) is the greatest density in the system. A density of 5% indicates there is only 1 of 19 possible connections. Possible reflections:

- Is there high or low density overall?
- Are there areas of greater density?

b) Centrality: Centrality focuses on the behaviour of individual participant/elements within a network. It measures the extent to which an individual interacts with other individuals in the network. The more an individual connects to others in a network, the greater their centrality in the network. Depending on the direction or mutuality of the connections, centrality can have in-degree and out-degree variables. In-degree centrality concentrates on a specific individual as the point of focus; centrality of all other individuals is based on their relation to the focal point of the "in-degree"

individual. Out-degree is a measure of centrality that still focuses on a single individual, but the analytic is concerned with the out-going interactions of the individual; the measure of out-degree centrality is how many times the focus point individual interacts with others. If we focus in on individual elements we can see their 'sociogram' and the relative centrality or not they play in the whole or certain areas of the network. Possible reflections:

- Are there obviously more central actors?
- To what extent is this due to the bias or partiality of your data or inputs available?
- Is centrality (where it exists) directional or mutual?
- Do areas of density cluster around points of centrality?

c) Connections Homophily: The extent to which actors form ties with similar versus dissimilar others. Similarity is defined in relation to the types and characteristics you have included in your mapping. Possible reflection: Are there places where homophility is strong? Are there actors who have greater connections with diverse and different types of actors? Multiplexity: The number of content-forms or types of interaction contained in a connection. For example, two people who are friends and also work together would have a multiplexity of

- Multiplexity: has been associated with relationship strength and can be a good basis for stronger trust based action. Possible reflection: Where do you see some of these stronger multiplex connections?
- Mutuality/Reciprocity and directionality of influence: The extent to which two actors reciprocate each other's friendship or other interaction.
- Possible reflection: What can we see about the nature of influence and power across our network in these terms?
- Strength: In network theory, strength is often defined by the linear combination of time, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocity (i.e. mutuality). Strong ties are also associated with homophily, propinquity (geographical proximity) and mutuality, while weak ties are associated with bridges. Possible reflection: How have you determined strength of connection? Is it useful to add a further category of 'very strong'?

d) Distributions Bridge: An individual whose weak ties fill a structural hole, providing the only link between two clusters. It also includes the shortest route when a longer one is unfeasible due to a high risk of message distortion or delivery failure. Possible reflection: Where are there bridging actors in the network? What relationship do you have to them? Structural holes and islands: Holes are the absence of ties between two parts of a network. Islands are clusters of the network that are unconnected or minimally connected to the rest. Possible reflection: Where are there holes and islands? What does this imply about the relationships and affinities in the network? e) Types of roles in the network.

1. **Influencer** or Hub: the node / actor that has the most direct connections in the network, making it the most active node in the network.
2. **Broker**: Has few direct connections -- fewer than the average in the network, but in many ways, has one of the best locations in the network -- she is between two important hubs. She plays a 'broker' role in the network.
3. **Catalysers**: The pattern of their direct and indirect ties allow them to access all the nodes in the network more quickly than anyone else. They have the shortest paths to all others. They

are in an excellent position in terms of information flow and they have the best visibility into what is happening in the network.

4. **Periphery**: Usually has very low centrality, but peripheral actors are connected to networks that are not currently mapped. Possible reflection: Which of these roles can you identify?

Step 3. Analyse the relational map

Ask some key analytical questions:

- What actors are there? Is there diversity? Who is missing?
- What are the strengths and capabilities of your network?
- What are the weaknesses? What capabilities are missing?
- What kinds of actors and/or relationships could help reduce your weakness and enhance your strengths?
- What are the key learnings in terms of connectivity (cooperation, flow of information/resources, organising, and influence across the network?

Conclusion and take aways

Conclude my summarising the key insights from the analysis and reflections on the relational maps.

SOURCE: Designed by Maria Llanos del Corral.

Theoretical esources

- Social network Analysis: an introduction.
- "Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action" edited by Mario Diani and Doug McAdam (2003)
- "The Strength of Weak Ties" by Mark Granovetter (1973)