

Sustaining the useful life of network governance: life cycles and developmental challenges

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Governance networks in large-scale landscape conservation are constantly changing as their constituent programs are created, are reconfigured, or cease to exist. Here, a four-stage life-cycle model is used to outline the challenges that network members face in designing healthy and useful governance processes, and a short description of the evolution of the Chicago Wilderness alliance helps to illustrate the dynamic nature of network governance. We deliberately use the concept of a “healthy and useful life” in place of more traditional measures of success because it highlights the constant nurturing that network processes require. The concept also draws attention to the fact that governance networks are a functional enterprise – even though they eventually come to the end of a life cycle, they most likely served useful functions while in operation.

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Large-scale landscape conservation is “governed” by a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actors whose decisions influence the health of ecological systems (Imperial and Hennessey 2000). Governance networks emerge because the capacity (eg leadership, staff, legal authority, technology, funding, etc) for addressing problems is widely dispersed and changes over time (Bressers *et al.* 1995). Networks provide a means for these actors

to make collective decisions, establish shared policies or priorities, improve coordination, and identify ways to work together productively (Wood and Gray 1991; Milward and Provan 2000; Imperial 2005a; Provan and Kennis 2008). Additional background regarding networks and network governance is provided in Scarlett and McKinney (2016) and specifically in Panel 1 therein.

We examine the dynamic nature of governance networks in terms of how they “ebb and flow, become dormant or extinct, and resurface with old and new participants under new names and organizational forms” (Genskow and Born 2006). Progress is made in addressing some problems while others increase in severity over time; moreover, advancements in our understanding of ecological systems also reveal new focus points that demand attention. As a result, governance networks form, disappear, or undergo profound change in response to new programs, challenges, capacities, funding opportunities, and leadership (Genskow and Born 2006).

Sustaining the useful life of a governance network requires understanding its developmental processes. We begin by discussing the concept of a “healthy and useful life” for governance networks, then introduce a four-stage model to describe the developmental challenges associated with sustaining a network’s useful life as it evolves; we describe the Chicago Wilderness alliance to illustrate these developmental processes, and then conclude by summarizing some general advice for network participants.

In a nutshell:

- Networks have life cycles and success should not be measured by their ability to perpetually endure; we introduce the concept of a “healthy and useful life” to underscore the constant nurturing required by network processes
- Networks need to attract suitable members, who must represent their respective organizations and participate on their behalf
- Politicians, managers, and funders should give networks space, flexibility, and time so that network processes can develop at their own pace
- The ability of a network to survive for a long period of time requires institutionalizing the social relationships upon which that network is founded
- It is important to recognize when a network has come to the end of a functional life cycle and to redeploy network resources to more productive public purposes

■ Conceptualizing governance networks as healthy and useful

The concept of a “healthy and useful life” (see below) is used in place of terms like “success” or “performance” for several reasons (see Bixler *et al.* 2016 for a

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discussion on performance measures). Networks create *value* in different ways as they develop (Mandell and Keast 2008; Voets *et al.* 2008). What is necessary to achieve healthy network processes when they are developing is often quite different from what is needed in mature networks (Genskow and Born 2006). This helps to explain the often contradictory advice found in the large-landscape conservation literature (Leach and Pelkey 2001): researchers examining “successful” efforts during early developmental stages may identify elements such as facilitation, leadership, building relationships, and trust as critical factors, whereas analyses of mature networks may highlight the importance of institutionalizing network structures and reliable resource streams. Advice related to sustaining healthy and useful network processes must consider where the network is in its developmental process.

The concept of a *healthy and useful life* also highlights that network processes require constant nurturing, without which hard-fought gains are easily lost. The term *nurturing* implies the gentle and continuous care of things like fragile plants, but nurturing an overgrown garden back to health can require drastic actions, such as cutting back excess growth, removing dead plants, and adding new topsoil and fertilizer to improve soil health. The same is true for nurturing in networks (Huxham 2003); often, the nurturing is gentle and continuous, but in some instances a fundamental transformation is necessary. The emphasis on “healthy” network processes also makes it easier to identify symptoms of “unhealthy” processes (such as those summarized in WebTable 1) that limit their useful life.

Traditional notions of “success” or “effectiveness” also imply that networks should last for a long time. This is not always the case. Networks, like other organizational forms, have a *useful life*, and when that useful life has passed, it is time to disband, re-orient, or re-create the network so its resources can be re-allocated in more productive ways. Network members often fail to think in these terms. Instead of viewing prior investments as a sunk cost, they escalate their commitment to prolong network processes, even after their useful lives have passed. Others are reluctant to disband, re-orient, or re-create the network because they fear losing valued personal relationships or the benefits associated with participation. However, clinging to networks in decline can strain those very relationships. Disbanding is often incorrectly viewed as failure when in fact it may actually signify success, because it allows resources needed for current landscape conservation problems to be redeployed more productively.

■ The network governance life cycle

Several perspectives have emerged that recognize that governance systems are part of a larger, interconnected social–ecological system (eg Gunderson *et al.* 1995;

Berkes and Folke 2002; Gunderson and Holling 2002; Anderies *et al.* 2004; Ostrom 2009). Our focus here is to gain a better understanding of how governance networks evolve so as to identify the strategies needed to sustain healthy processes as they mature. The developmental process often necessitates slow growth because it takes time to develop communication, trust, commitment, understanding, and outcomes (Edelenbos and Klijn 2005; Ansell and Gash 2008, 2012; Jap and Anderson 2007; Mandell and Keast 2008; Johnston *et al.* 2010). The models proposed for understanding network development typically focus initially on building relationships, while later stages emphasize stability and achievements (eg Ring and Van de Ven 1994; Forsyth 1999). Although networks are formed with the idea that they are flexible and adapt to changing environmental conditions, in reality they go through a “convergence process”, where the continued interactions soon produce shared rules and norms that yield stable, change-resistant structures. Accountability systems can motivate network actors to participate and contribute resources, but too much accountability may cause members to no longer participate in the network (Imperial 2005b). Network formation usually requires personal relationships and commitments; however, mature networks require stable, rule-based structures that are less dependent on personal relationships. Accordingly, a focus on developmental processes puts some of the paradoxical challenges of network governance in their proper context.

We use the four-stage model depicted in Figure 1 to frame the discussion of the developmental processes that occur in networks. The model is grounded in organizational theory (Kimberly 1980; Quinn and Cameron 1983; Smith *et al.* 1985; Whetten 1987). We describe the challenges associated with developing, organizing, and sustaining healthy network structures and processes. The *activation stage* is the turbulent period of network formation; the *collectivity stage* is exemplified by high member cohesion and reliable network processes; the *institutionalization stage* marks the solidification of the network, or the “structure” that shapes and constrains network processes and influences their ability to adapt to changing conditions; and the final stage is *stability, decline, re-orientation, or re-creation*, which recognizes the various paths for mature network processes. The key characteristics and clusters of challenges for each stage are summarized in Table 1.

While Figure 1 and Table 1 suggest a sequential ordering, the network need not follow a linear trajectory. Network participants may confront challenges from different stages simultaneously (Tushman and Romanelli 1985; Whetten 1987). Similarly, progression from one stage to the next does not signify a more “advanced” network. Moreover, while the last stage of life is decline and death, there is no reason to presuppose that all networks “die”, or that “dying” is a bad thing. Other networks

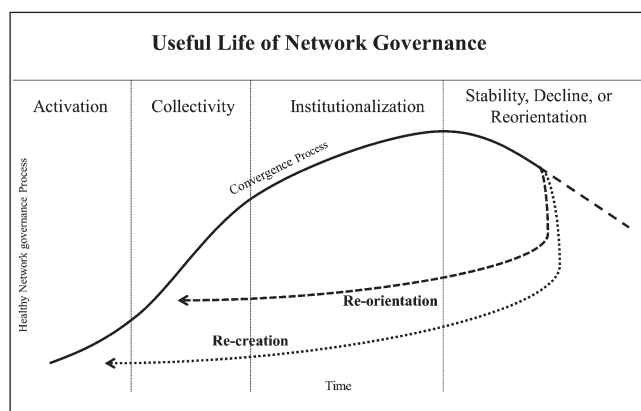


Figure 1. A life-cycle model of network governance processes.

undoubtedly die untimely deaths or manage to survive well past their useful lives, but death can occur at any time for many reasons.

The Chicago Wilderness alliance

The development of the Chicago Wilderness (CW) alliance demonstrates the dynamic nature of network governance. Originally founded by 34 organizations, it is now a regional network of more than 300 entities working together to protect and restore healthy, functioning natural systems to support healthy, vibrant communities across the greater Chicago, Illinois, metropolitan region (parts of four states, including 38 counties, over 500 municipalities, and more than 9400 square miles; Figure 2). Originally, about 62% of CW members were governmental organizations; today, governmental organizations constitute about 27% of membership.

The alliance coordinates diverse organizations, agencies, and businesses around regional conservation priorities at the landscape scale, resulting in enduring impacts on the ecosystems and watersheds that support the 10 million people living in the region. To support the network, CW established a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to administer the alliance's public and private funding, and to officially employ its executive director and staff. Chicago Wilderness deploys its shared network resources to strategically focus its conservation efforts, foster a regional voice, attract new partners and funding, create shared tools, build organizational capacity, and implement systemic solutions that can be accomplished only through collaboration. Some of the innovative partnerships it has generated are depicted in Figures 3 and 4. As summarized in WebTable 2, CW has required constant nurturing over the past 20 years, resulting in numerous changes to its social architecture (ie the configuration or pattern of rules and social norms that produce stable network interactions) designed to sustain healthy network governance processes and maintain focus on its core mission (Heneghan *et al.* 2012).

Stage 1: activation

Activation is the initial stage of network development. It provides the “imprint” that establishes the parameters that will shape future development (Stinchcombe 1965). Networks are formed for many reasons. Government agencies, funders, or other “top-down” forces encourage or require network participation or specify other aspects of governance processes. Networks like CW can also self-organize (Huxham 2003; Ostrom 2005). Some reflect the *intentionality* of founding members (Katz and Gartner 1988), whereas others take shape as members grapple with common challenges (Head 2008).

Network processes are fluid during the activation stage. Although it may be clear who core members are, others come and go as they explore whether the network can advance their self-interests or they can afford the resource exchanges (eg information, staff time, money, etc) associated with participation. Fortunately, the costs of change are relatively low because members have not invested substantial amounts of time in developing rules, routines, and processes (Katz and Gartner 1988). The difference between the network's goals and those of individual members may be hard to distinguish. Indeed, attracting, embracing, and supporting the “right” kind of members and determining when they should enter (or exit) network processes is a constant challenge (Agranoff and McGuire 2001; Johnston *et al.* 2010).

Networks initially rely on the cooperation of strangers (Stinchcombe 1965), as members rarely have the luxury of choosing the individuals they work with. While some network members have working relationships, wariness, rather than trust, is likely the starting point. When activated, the network is a fragmented and unstable social system (Mandell and Keast 2008), and so early priorities include building relationships rather than accomplishing tasks. Given the activation stage's turbulent nature, the best gauge of “health” may simply be whether the network continues to exist and members believe it can generate public value. Simply put, young organizations (and networks) have a greater propensity for failure (ie *liability of newness*) than older ones (eg Stinchcombe 1965; Freeman *et al.* 1983; Gray and Ariss 1985; Singh *et al.* 1986a,b; Bruderl and Schussler 1990; Amburgey *et al.* 1993; Burt 2002; Koka *et al.* 2006).

The activation stage of the CW alliance involved many of these developmental challenges. The network's founders spent 3 years grappling with questions of *why* (impact to humans and nature from loss of globally important biodiversity across a jurisdictionally complex region), *who* (which land managers and which critical partners), and *how* (articulating shared objectives and designing a transparent, layered, decision-making structure) while activating the network. The original core participants were quite varied in terms of their support and included enthusiasts, the cautious-but-willing, and naysayers. The strength of

Table 1. Key differences in the stages of network development

	Stages of network development			
	Activation	Collectivity	Institutionalization	Stability, decline, re-orientation, or re-creation
Useful life	- Does the network exist? - Is there some public value to creating the network?	Does the network produce a good or service using a reliable process?	Does the perceived value of the goods and services exceed the costs?	Could the resources contributed to network processes be better deployed?
Emphasis	- Determine whether the network should exist - Build relationships - Establish core values and mission	- Forge a cohesive whole from diverse members - Create a stable network process	- Institutionalize the social architecture - Improve efficiency of network processes	- Incremental change to improve performance - External threats and performance issues lead to re-orientation
Membership and social system	- Unstable at first - Stable processes and stable membership soon emerge	- Membership stabilizes - Cohesive processes create stable system - Heavily dependent on personal relationships	- Very stable - While relationships remain important, the process is no longer dependent on individuals - New members quickly socialized	- May be stable - Excessive member turnover, declining commitments, performance issues create instability - Re-orientations create instability
Commitment	Membership is viewed as a way to advance individual or organizational goals	High personal commitment to the network and its shared goals	Individually based commitments become organizational	- Commitments correlate with collective performance - Members look to redeploy resources to new problems
Resistance to change	- Very low - Frequent changes as members search for appropriate processes	Growing resistance to change as the need to produce goods and services takes hold	- High resistance to change - Mostly incremental change to reduce costs and improve performance	- High resistance to change - Resistance remains high in the face of threats and poor performance
Network leadership	Heavily reliant on collaborative leaders to initiate network processes	- Collaborative leaders coordinate and facilitate network processes - Leadership is increasingly shared by network processes	- Leadership is distributed and shared as a result of network processes and structure - As founders retire or leave, new leaders are cultivated and activated	- Leadership is distributed and shared as a result of structure and processes - Collaborative leaders are needed to guide re-orientations

existing relationships and the recognition of the interdependence of the members encouraged the perpetuation of the group. The effort also had a leader whose consensus-building leadership style and efforts helped navigate this turbulent period. The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN's) decision-making body then became the governance structure model they decided to emulate. When publicly launched in 1996, the network quickly attracted additional resources and added a wide range of diverse stakeholders. However, the emerging governance structure proved exceptionally strong, and prevented the CW alliance from losing its focus when network membership expanded.

Stage 2: collectivity

The CW's turbulent activation period gave rise to a more stable network process, emphasizing robust communication structures, even though its members were physically, professionally, politically, socioeconomically, geographically, and culturally diverse (Vangen and Huxham 2003; Figure 2). During the collectivity stage, which is exemplified by high member cohesion and reliable network processes, the network focuses on: *facilitating and nurturing member interactions* to forge a working whole out of the members' diverse resources (Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010; Saz-Carranza and Ospina 2010); *framing problems and solutions* in ways that

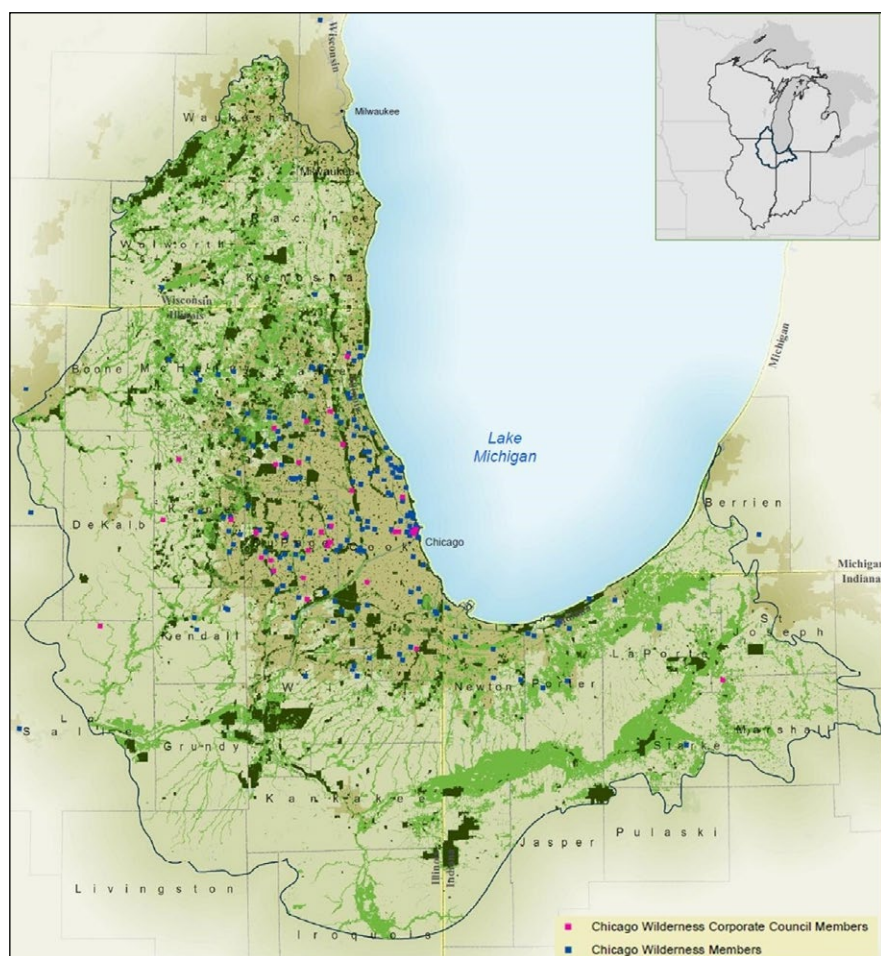


Figure 2. The geographic scope of the Chicago Wilderness. Over 300 organizational members distributed across four states and 38 counties share one vision to protect, restore, and connect almost 769 000 hectares (1.9 million acres) within the Chicago metropolitan region. Dark green areas are protected lands; light green areas represent a coordinated open-space plan for the region to benefit people, protect biodiversity, and promote resiliency.

motivate ongoing participation and mobilize network resources (Kauneckis and Imperial 2007; Foldy *et al.* 2008); *crafting equitable decision rules* even though considerable power differences exist outside network processes (Vangen and Huxham 2003); and *inculcating new members* to the network's shared norms, rules, and routines (Johnston *et al.* 2010). Eventually, the emphasis shifts from building relationships and deciding what to do, to producing some good or service; in short, the network must demonstrate its "proof-of-concept". Processes are needed to ensure members contribute resources to sustain network governance (Huxham and Vangen 2000). While resources may exceed returns, there is a growing sense that the benefits justify their continued investment in network processes (Cameron and Whetten 1981, 1983). As evidenced by the CW alliance, once the network survives the initial testing period, it becomes less risky to make investments to enhance processes, and it becomes easier to attract new members and

secure outside resources (Kim *et al.* 2006). As a result, cycles of resource exchanges (eg staff time and information, as well as technical, financial, or other support) become increasingly secure (Katz and Gartner 1988).

By the end of the collectivity stage, a healthy and useful life is gauged in terms of whether the network is producing goods or services using reliable processes (Head 2008). Thus, while this stage is exemplified by high member cohesion, network processes are now the product of a configuration of shared rules that create the social architecture that provides a "structure" to network processes (see Imperial *et al.* [2016] in this issue for a discussion on architecture; also Imperial 1999; Mandell and Keast 2007). The emergence of this social architecture is a vital step in the convergence process, as it is the reinforcing nature of the connection between structure and process that produces stability, and promotes resilience and resistance to change.

The evolution of CW demonstrates the importance of providing opportunities for members to interact and forge a shared sense of identity built around common goals. Once the network was established, CW began a multi-year participatory effort that resulted in the publication of the *Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan* (CRBC 1999). The inclusive nature of network processes

galvanized members around a shared understanding of the region's loss of biodiversity and unified priorities for addressing this problem. These priorities have been amended twice to sustain healthy network processes by adding recovery strategies to protect Lake Michigan and adaptation strategies to respond to climate change. The plan, its vision, and shared priorities continue to serve as the blueprint for all stakeholders – planners, funders, land managers, governments, and citizens – working locally and across boundaries.

Stage 3: institutionalization

The network's adoption of the *Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan* allowed CW to demonstrate its "proof-of-concept" and also provided a mechanism to "institutionalize" the network's shared priorities; this stage is where the network has become fully accepted and used by the vast majority of members



Figure 3. Chicago Wilderness's Leave No Child Inside program. During the month of June, nearly 100 organizations collaborate in CW's annual Leave No Child Inside Month. In 2014, the network coordinated opportunities for more than 65 000 children and their families to explore the outdoors. The initiative encourages unstructured time outdoors and provides a multitude of open spaces to discover nature through play.

Institutionalization can be a gradual process. Although the *Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan* institutionalized many aspects of the CW governance network, the alliance's processes and structure were streamlined repeatedly to eliminate redundancy and address the changing balance of organizational sectors in the ever-expanding network. These adjustments helped to sustain healthy network processes, as reflected by higher rates of attendance at meetings, efficiencies gained in network processes, and increased distribution and representation of its diverse membership. Efforts within CW also became more specialized over time. For example, the Science Team produced a Social Science and Natural Science Research Agenda to promote and coordinate region-wide cooperation among the research community working on protected lands, which created new opportunities for collaboration among researchers, and strengthened the links between the science and practice of restoration.

(that is, it has become "institutionalized"). By the institutionalization stage, network members had been working together for some time and cooperation had become routine (Mandell and Keast 2008). But eventually, individuals involved in early network processes move on and are replaced and, as with the CW alliance, new members join. Institutionalizing key aspects of the network's structure and processes (eg rules, routines, procedures) using formal mechanisms (eg bylaws, work plans, strategic plans, membership directories, websites, other program documents) makes departures less problematic while providing a way to integrate new members.

By this stage, the network's "niche" within the broader institutional system is well established. The social architecture used to coordinate network processes is institutionalized and resources needed for survival are relatively secure. The network's useful life is increasingly viewed in terms of its perceived value compared to the resources it requires to sustain healthy processes. Network members may look for ways to reduce costs and increase benefits (Mandell and Keast 2008). Specialized working groups or modified structures may be used to improve decision-making efficiency, and specialization and differentiation of functions may occur. The emphasis is on maintaining a structure that is "built to last" (Head 2008).

Stage 4: stability, decline, re-orientation, and re-creation

The stability that CW achieved during the institutionalization phase is the product of the convergence process associated with network development. Modifications primarily involved incremental adjustments in rules, routines, and procedures to improve service delivery (Cameron and Whetten 1981). The "inertia" (ie resistance to change) associated with this highly stable network structure is not a symptom of "bad governance" but instead reflects a mature social architecture designed to endure for a long time if needed resources are acquired (Hannan and Freeman 1984; Kim *et al.* 2006). As a result, CW was able to grow its network and foster a wide range of programmatic activities (Figures 3 and 4).

At some point, network processes break down and a prolonged decline may occur (Sydow 2004; Mandell and Keast 2008). Network members experience "burnout" due to the energy and commitment they put into network roles (Huxham and Vangen 2000). Some move out of the region or are promoted and no longer have the time for membership activities, while others feel it is safe to "pass the baton" to others representing their organizations. New members can eventually dominate network membership, but their priorities or commitment may differ from that of the founding members. Losing focus on the

network mission can occur as members chase scarce resources or as funders change priorities (Auer *et al.* 2011). Problems that once motivated network participation either get solved or become less of a priority. Declines may also occur due to group dynamics such as “free riding”, where members reap benefits without contributing to the network (Williams *et al.* 1981; Wageman 1999). In short, members view the network’s useful life in terms of the opportunity costs of their continued participation (Mandell and Keast 2008). As a result, members may deploy network resources elsewhere, perhaps even to other governance networks.

Eventually, sustaining the network’s useful life will require a re-orientation (or re-creation). *Re-orientations* involve rapid, strategic, and sporadic changes that transform the configuration of members, communication patterns, decision processes, and established routines in order to sustain healthy network processes. For example, the network may change its geographic focus, enlarge or contract the scope of issues or problems, or change the portfolio of goods and services provided. *Re-creations* involve an additional sporadic shift in core values among network members. Re-orientations and re-creations occur for many reasons. They can be imposed externally (ie by government or funders) or may arise in response to internal factors, such as member dissatisfaction, emergence of new priorities, loss of valued members (or their resources), excessive member turnover, mergers (or separations), new start-ups, the disbanding of the network or the need to secure new resources (Huxham 2003). Re-orientations or re-creations may be necessary when the problems or solutions that originally motivated participation become framed in new ways. It may also be necessary to use the strategy of *de-activation* to expel members or introduce new participants to change network dynamics (Mandell and Steelman 2003).

Several examples of periods where CW underwent re-orientation in response to external and internal opportunities, shifts, or threats to sustain healthy network processes include: a decision to engage the business community in network governance, two important expansions of the network’s regional geographical coverage, and a move to form a national network of conservation coalitions working in metro regions (see also WebTable 2). These periods of rapid sporadic change were followed by relatively stable periods of convergence. For over a decade, the network’s regional impact was driven by crucial financial support from federal agencies. Over that time period, the financial resources invested by federal agencies were leveraged nearly 20 times by the network. More recently, network leaders have focused on responding to the loss of federal funding from two key agencies. Chicago Wilderness is re-orienting to address this threat, which may even result in the network’s re-creation.

Although re-orientations may occur at any time, Figure 1 depicts them in the final stage to emphasize the relatively long convergence process where periods of



Figure 4. In December 2014, the Chicago Wilderness alliance honored 23 sites for excellence in habitat restoration, conservation design, and native landscaping. As one of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Bluff Spring Fen Preserve in Elgin, Illinois, was awarded platinum-level accreditation for excellence in ecological restoration. The 66.7-hectare (165-acre) site – known for its unique namesake wetland – supports a diverse community of native plants and wildlife, including 12 species listed by the state of Illinois as threatened or endangered.

stability are punctuated by rapid re-orientations or re-creations (Tushman and Romanelli 1985). While network leadership is critical to develop and sustain network processes during each stage, it is particularly crucial when navigating periods of re-orientation (see Imperial *et al.* [2016] for a discussion about leadership in network governance). There is no guarantee, however, that the re-oriented network will survive this process. Network members must once again confront the developmental challenges associated with the activation and collectivity stages, and a new period of convergence on a stable structure begins (Tushman and Romanelli 1985; Amburgey *et al.* 1993). Regardless of the risks, re-orientations (and re-creations) are needed to respond to threats (or opportunities); otherwise, a period of declining support for the network may occur along with reductions in its performance. They are therefore valuable opportunities to innovate, adapt, and sustain a network’s useful life by deploying resources in more productive ways.

■ Conclusions

Network governance is dynamic, time consuming, and often fraught with difficulty (Bardach 1998; O’Leary and Bingham 2009; Ospina and Saz-Carranza 2010). Each stage of the developmental process presents its own set of challenges that can undermine the health of network processes. Fortunately, as summarized in Table 2, there are many strategies available to sustain the useful life of network processes as they evolve and mature. Members should be mindful that network governance is only useful in so far as these cooperative

Table 2. Ways to sustain healthy network governance processes

	<i>Stages of network development</i>			
	<i>Activation</i>	<i>Collectivity</i>	<i>Institutionalization</i>	<i>Stability, decline, re-orientation, or re-creation</i>
Key features of each stage	• Membership is a bit unstable • Focus is on figuring out what the network can do • Differentiate roles of the network from that of its members	• High member cohesion develops • Network has a distinct identity • Focus of discussions shifts from what to do to how to do it	• Stable membership, processes, and resources • Process is not dependent on individuals • Focus is on fine-tuning network processes	• Stability and members resist proposals for change • Resource streams are relatively secure • Few founding members are still involved
Stage-specific symptoms of unhealthy network processes	• Poor attendance at meetings • Members do not seem to do more than attend meetings • Difficulty finding a focal problem to motivate participation • A lot of overlap with existing networks	• Unstable membership and decision-making processes • Meetings are filled with conflict • Asymmetries of power within network processes • Members unwilling to invest much more than their time at meetings • Focus shifts to what to do before relationship building occurs	• Departures of key individuals are viewed as a crisis • Unstable membership, processes, or resource streams • Network maintenance becomes a goal rather than getting things done • Entrenchment stifles network capacity to innovate or adapt	• Departures of key individuals are viewed as a crisis • Resistance to change when change is needed • Members exit or stop committing resources • Mission drift • Excessive member turnover • A high degree of “free-riding” • New problems command members’ attention
Stage-specific tactics used to nurture network processes	• Focus on attracting the “right” members and their leaders • Give thought to what members to include and when to incorporate them into network processes • Be deliberative and plan the network’s development • Small group of collaborative leaders is needed to “champion” the network’s development • Allow network’s collaborative culture to develop organically; expect and plan for the time it takes for this to occur	• Facilitate and nurture member interactions • Create space for dialogue • Take the time needed to build relationships and a stable process • Ensure members participate as equals within network processes • Establish clear rules regarding membership and network processes • Leadership is distributed among many network members • Members share credit and avoid placing blame	• Rules structuring network processes are clearly described (eg websites, documents, bylaws) • New members are quickly socialized to new rules • Develop new processes to streamline decision making • Leadership is distributed among many network members • Members share credit and avoid placing blame	• Do not ignore signs of prolonged decline • Periodic efforts to focus or refocus on mission • Disband, re-orient, or re-create when network resources can be put to better use • Small group of collaborative leaders is needed to “champion” re-orientations • Leaders able to seek external input to evaluate network effectiveness • Members share credit and avoid placing blame

efforts produce greater public value than can be achieved individually (Bardach 1998; Huxham 2003). Even when networks provide synergistic opportunities to create public value, members must recognize that network processes require constant nurturing.

Even when disbanded, networks may have had useful lives. Individuals and organizations learn to collaborate simply by collaborating. This know-how can be redeployed in subsequent network processes (Imperial and

Kauneckis 2003). Trust and relationships provide the foundation for future network interactions. Dormant networks are also valuable because they possess latent connections that can be re-activated later, perhaps even for unrelated purposes. Most importantly, by removing the stigma of failure to the final stage of a network life cycle, participants can imagine how the resources once devoted to a network process can now be redeployed to more productive public purposes.

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