



Advancing knowledge,
shaping policy, inspiring practice

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Not everything that connects is a network

.....
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Networks

- Literally, a buzzword
- 'A network of networks'
- Consortium
- Alliance



Not written for any network

- Not social networks
- Not for professional associations
- Written for networks 'developed' or 'created' to do research across organisation or country boundaries; to influence; to build capacity; etc.



Why the concern?

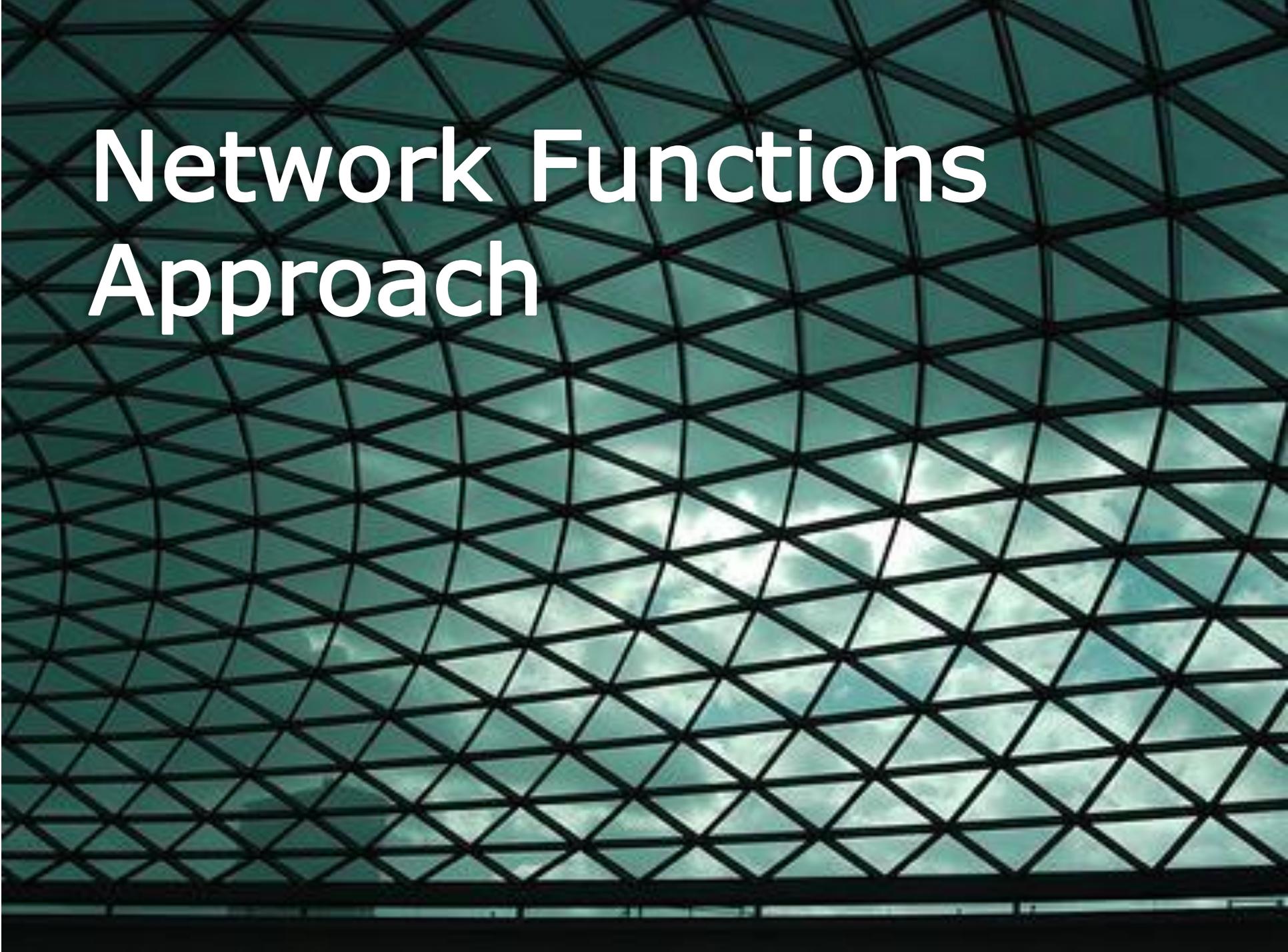
- Networks are too often an automatic strategy with not enough understanding of what they are, what they do and how they do it
- Assumptions: flexible, easier, cheaper, sustainable, etc.
- Confusion: between members (the network) and the secretariat (which can be an organisation)



As a consequence

- Networks are underfunded to NETWORK
- They are made to run before they can walk
- They are treated as projects –with ‘expected’ results
- Asked to adopt new functions to satisfy their funders (old and new)
- They are over-engineered

Network Functions Approach





The Network Functions Approach

- Four elements

1) Purpose

2) Roles

3) Function

4) Form

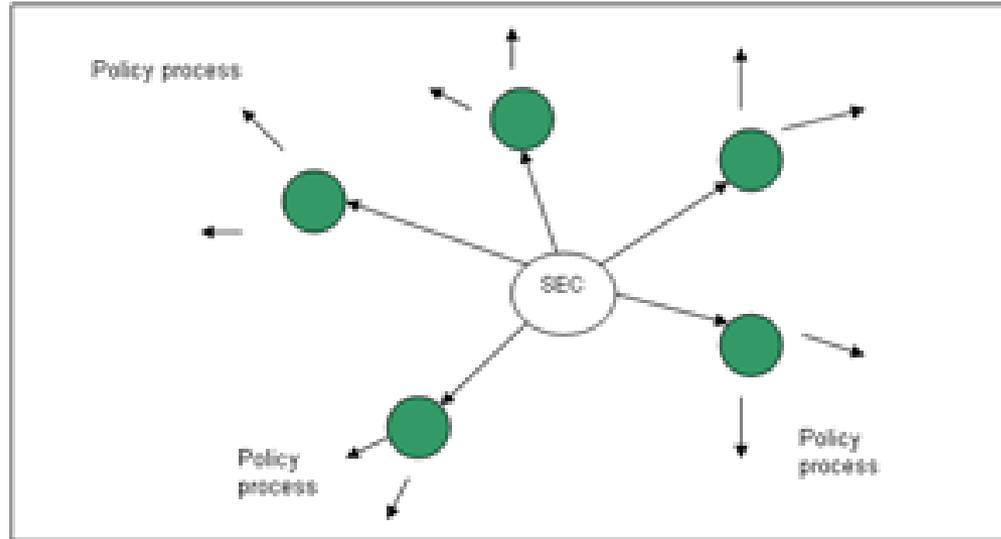




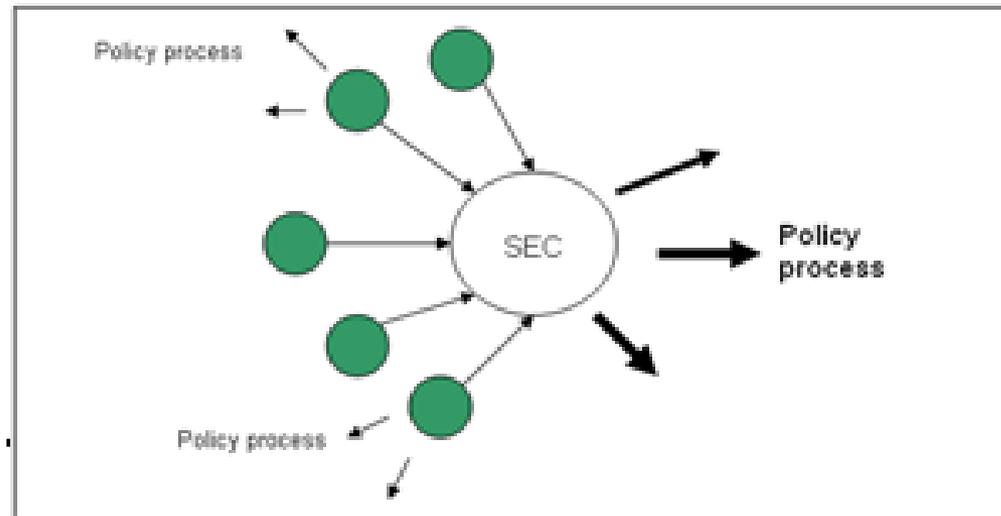
Purpose

- Justification for its existence
- Express the value of a network strategy
- Describe the theory of how a network will be used
- Distinct from the purpose of the secretariat

Support



Agency

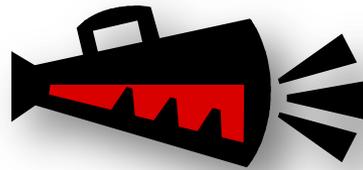




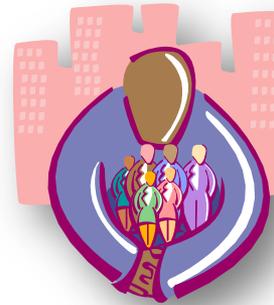
Functions



Knowledge management



Amplification and advocacy



Community building



Convening



Mobilise resources



- Membership
- Governance
- Resources
- Capacity and skill
- Localisation and scope
- Communications
- External environment
- Strategic and adaptive capacity



Membership

- Networks aren't created out of nothing
- Existing relationships, shared values and interests...
- Unclear boundaries
- Tie-strength



Governance

- Rules and norms are not always explicit
- Different levels of formality and centralisation
- Emerging and evolving structures
- Nested arrangements of varying detail



Resources and attention

- Networks require care and attention
- People have divided priorities – there's competition
- Without regular attention from members, a network will diminish
- Stewardship is often necessary