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Interactive comment on “Goal-oriented networks and capacity building for natural hazards – examples in the Dresden region” by G. Hutter

Anonymous Referee #2

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As many others the author regards networks and networking as essential in successful capacity building with reference to natural hazards. The paper therefore follows the more specific question “How do network actors create goal-directedness in networks that aim to build capacities for natural hazards?” (p. 2) This question is specified as “\textellipsis how (and to what extend) networks of organizations develop goal direct-edness.” (p. 3)

Hence, the author draws from a wide range of literature, especially from organizational studies/theory and explains the basic categories, e.g. network size, goals, modes of collaboration between network actors, management processes, governance forms and heterogeneity of actors. The paper is very clear and convincing in explaining these central categories of networks of organizations (part 2). Unfortunately, I failed

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to understand the distinction (and its importance) between goal directedness and goal orientation. This is sad - the author states that this distinction is “crucial to understand this paper.” (p. 4) Elaboration of the difference is provided on p. 4. Goal orientation is, accordingly, meant as “rationale to establish a network.” Furthermore, it “is a core network feature, whereas goal directedness may vary with regard to, among others, with willingness, capabilities, and resources of actors to make sense of a network goal.” (p. 4) Perhaps the differences can be made clearer?

The paper’s focus is restricted to “networks with initial goal declarations that are quite abstract and/or ambiguous.” (p. 4)

Other minor modifications which I want to suggest are:

- a) In Chapter 2.2 network size is first defined by number of network actors; two sentences later it is defined by number of ties between network actors. This reads like a contradiction which could be eliminated easily.
- b) In part 3 it is claimed that funding was provided by “national government”. As far as I know it was funded by Ministries of the Federal Government (which I believe is not identical with ‘National Government’=\$= Bundesregierung).
- c) The comparison of the two case studies would profit from a graph/table or synopsis summarizing the relevant similarities and differences.

Readers of NHESS might be surprised to learn almost nothing about capacity building in this paper. Also, the goals of networks (in general and in particular) and their contribution to such capacities building remain untouched. The paper keeps to a strict and narrow organizational theory perspective - which is not bad. The narrowness of the paper’s perspective is conclusive. Nevertheless, several complements would be usefull:

- Would it be possible to elaborate a bit more in detail about goals networks have, especially in the context of capacity building? It would be interesting to learn more about

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them! Not just in terms of the two case studies, but in general. The first paragraph in part 2.1 touches on this problem, however much too brief.

- The emergence of both networks discussed in the paper appears to me as being solely (100 per cent!) the reaction to emerging funding schemes, with the primary goal to receive funding. It would be challenging to compare networks of this type with other configurations, for instance bottom-up initiatives (like flood-interested citizens in Cologne) or NGOs and charity organizations agreeing to professionalize their lobbying efforts by way of network cooperation.

Acknowledgment of the vastness of the spectrum of top-down and bottom-up (!) initiated networks and their manifold contributions to capacity building could perhaps help the author to put his own findings and generalizations into a wider perspective. For instance, criminal gangs (which act as networks) can be very resilient - being highly effective in capacity building with the goal to keep things going according to the gang's/organization's interests.

In short: Definitely a paper worth publication. It might initiate a broader discussion. It clearly shows that we still do not know much about organizations and the way they can contribute (and hinder!) social capacity building for natural hazards. It is the only profound reflection on state-initiated networks said to improve social resilience in Germany I am aware of, so far. This is a pretty good begin, congratulations!

Interactive comment on Nat. Hazards Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 1, 1051, 2013.

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