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BFN
Better Futures Network
Rede Por Um Futuro Melhor

Report of the First International Forum of the Better Futures Network

Realização

COEP
Rede Nacional de Mobilização Social

Carleton Centre for Community Innovation

Laboratório Herbert de Souza
TECNOLOGIA e Cidadania
COPPE – UFRJ

BFN

Better Futures Network

Rede Por Um Futuro Melhor

Report on the First International Forum of the Better Futures Network,
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Nov. 25 – 28, 2013

Building the Foundation:
Report of the First International Forum of the Better Futures Network

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Acronyms

APUCEN	Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network
BFN	Better Futures Network
CASRI	Caribbean Self-Reliance International
CCCI/3ci	Carleton Centre for Community Innovation
CFICE	Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement Project
COEP	Committee of Entities in the Struggle Against Hunger and For Life
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FIOCRUZ	Oswaldo Cruz Foundation
GACER	Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research
GUNi	Global University Network for Innovation
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
PCSA	Programa Comunidades Semiárido
PRIA	Society for Participatory Research in Asia
RJ	Rio de Janeiro
Reciclario	National Network of Solidarity Enterprises
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
UCPSARnet	University-Community Partnerships Social Action Research Network
UFRJ	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Highlights of the Forum

- **Participation by members of Brazilian communities**
  BFN promotes the active participation of *comunitário/as*[1] [§] within its membership and its events. The presence of community members is a distinctive feature of the network. In two sessions of this Forum, three leaders of community organizations presented their stories of their work, their communities, and their achievements. All were women, and one is part of an emerging cadre of young community leaders. They came to the Forum from both rural and urban communities in Brazil, from the huge metropolis of Rio de Janeiro and from a small agricultural community in the state of Alagoas in the semi-arid zones of the Northeast. They infused the Forum with the authenticity, dignity, urgency and immediacy of their words.
- The participation of comunitárias in the Forum in turn highlighted a rare asset of the BFN: **its members give the network the capability to convene a conversation embracing both members of communities and officials of the Office of the Presidency.** This social bridge extends to researchers, teachers and students from universities, as well as members of CSOs and public agencies. This capability rests on legitimacy, credibility and contacts at the macro, meso and micro levels of society.
- BFN members presented a wide variety of **case studies offering relevance and depth, and grounded in practical knowledge.**
- Case studies showed that a **new generation of leaders is taking shape and taking responsibility in communities and their organizations**, especially among women and young people. The comunitárias' presence at the Forum showed the importance and the power of this change. A comparable change took place within the BFN itself: In the latter part of the Forum, the sessions following the case studies, younger members seized the opportunity to participate in (and thus expand and diversify) the Management Committee of the BFN.
- This initiative by the new members of the Management Committee highlighted **a growing sense of partnership and common cause among BFN members**, created over the four days of the Forum.
- The Forum also produced **greater clarity on the distinctiveness of the BFN:** its thematic focus, its co-ordination from Brazil, a commitment to both community presence and policy engagement, and an emphasis on social technology – all these set it apart from other networks on community-university engagement.
- All this added up to significant **engagement and movement on key issues in the organizational development of the BFN**: management, membership and governance; guiding principles for programming and resourcing; staffing and electronic infrastructure.
- Members of the network agreed on **a followup action plan** to guide the new Management Committee, including an array of proposals for practical collaboration within and beyond the BFN. Already, members are actively pursuing some of these:
  - ⇒ COEP and 1125@carleton.ca have agreed to build a partnership using incubators and networking to promote social and technical innovation, a partnership which would link to the BFN as a whole.

⇒ CASRI and COEP are planning a linkage to bring together community members, support institutions and policymakers in Brazil and Guyana, focusing on food security and community-based agricultural enterprise

The video record of the Forum, produced by COEP, may be found at this link:
http://youtu.be/tpQggr67YFw

1.0 Background, Objectives and Program of the Forum

The Forum was the first public event of the Better Futures Network (BFN). Held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, between November 25 and 28, 2013, it was jointly organized by the two founding partners of the network, COEP and the Carleton Centre for Community Innovation (3ci) of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. COEP hosted the event, which took place in the headquarters of Furnas, Brazil's largest electricity producer and one of COEP's core member organizations.

The BFN is an international knowledge network dedicated to advancing the empowerment and transformation of marginalized communities. Building on its members' work with communities, the network has chosen to focus its programming on the following core themes: *livelihoods, work and income; active citizenship, especially leadership among women and youth; climate change and sustainable communities; and social and technical innovation*. Members of the BFN include universities, research organizations, networks and civil society organizations, individuals from all those organizations, and the communities they work with.

The BFN began at the initiative of senior members of COEP and 3ci. Over the course of 2012-13, this group developed the idea of the network, drawing on advice and commentary from colleagues active in community-university engagement around the world. The BFN Organizing Group found a keen response among members of comparable existing international networks, such as the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNi), the Asia-Pacific University-Community Engagement Network (APUCEN), the Global Alliance for Community-Engaged Research (GACER), the Talloires Network, and the University of Victoria-PRIA UNESCO Chair in Higher Education and Social Responsibility. Colleagues in CSOs showed similar interest. Respondents said that the proposed BFN offered distinctive qualities:

- Brazilians' experience, policies, and learning;
- The opportunity to engage with community members, and to build on their practical knowledge;
- Participants from diverse organizations—universities, research organizations, operational agencies, CSOs, and communities themselves;

- A focus on a few key themes, allowing in-depth examination of the issues, and incorporating both academic and practical knowledge.

The Organizing Group built on this positive response by inviting international and Brazilian colleagues to take part in a four-day Forum in Rio de Janeiro, from Nov. 25 to 28. The organizers saw the Forum as a watershed in the development of the BFN. The first public event of the BFN, its content and participants would foreshadow the profile of the future network. Thus, the Forum would highlight the ***content*** which the network could offer – and in doing so, test the relevance and usefulness of its agenda. The vehicle for doing so would be case studies by prospective members, reflecting on their practice and what they had learned on the core themes and issues. Secondly, however, the Forum would be an opportunity to ***develop the network***: members would shape its governance, management, programming and resourcing. The vehicle for this discussion would be a draft Mid-Term Program Plan for 2015-18, and the test would be members' readiness to commit themselves to an action plan to build the BFN.

Objectives

The Organizing Group thus set out three objectives for the Forum:

1) To stimulate learning and knowledge production: Using case studies, Forum participants would build practical and theoretical knowledge on co-operation between communities, universities, and research organizations. The intent is to use this knowledge to inform action for community sustainability and empowerment.
2) To develop the network as an organization: Participants would build and commit themselves to a short-and-medium-term plan for the BFN. This would include a program, arrangements for management and governance, and resourcing.
3) To build a partnership among prospective network members: Face-to-face dialogue would allow participants to build mutual knowledge and trust on values, directions, roles and responsibilities, and planned activities.

Program of the Forum

To address the first two objectives, the program of the Forum comprised two main elements:

- Case studies prepared by participants. There were seven of these. The Forum also included a session on working with and supporting *catadore/as*[2] and their organizations. This session included presentations by community members, by officials of the Rio de Janeiro state government, and by a BFN member working with catadores' organizations in São Paulo. Together, these were the first examples of the program of the Better Futures Network.
- Planning the program, management and governance, and budget of the BFN for the short and medium term, 2014 – 2018.

As for the third objective, the organizers expected that participants would build a partnership by working together on the content of the Forum and of the network-in-the-making. This was not something to be taken for granted. The profile of Forum participants pointed towards a network with a large and diverse cultural, geographic and institution reach and makeup. Participants registered for the Forum from Canada and Brazil, Argentina, Malaysia, the United Sates, South Africa, and Uganda. They belonged to and/or represented very large organizations and networks, some of the latter global in scope, as well as small voluntary organizations working with communities in defined geographic areas. The core of Brazilian and international participants was well suited to a workshop, with a maximum of twenty participants. The organizers opened the case-study sessions of the Forum to a wider public in Brazil, however. As a result, that part of the program included between forty and sixty participants affiliated with COEP's state networks. These ranged from policy-makers and scientists to teachers, public servants and community activists.

Finally, the Forum enjoyed a supportive political presence. Representatives of the host organizations formally opened the Forum; they were joined in this by a senior official in the Office of Presidency of the Republic. A longstanding ally of COEP, he took part in the full two-plus days of case-study sessions. On the last day of the Forum, Brazilian and international participants met the Director of the Faculty of Engineering at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, one of COEP's founders and the Executive Secretary of the Brazilian Forum on Climate Change.[3] The Faculty houses the Herbert de Souza Laboratory for Citizenship and Technology, a joint project of COEP and the Faculty which is named after COEP's first President, and which is linked to a national network of social innovation incubators across Brazil.

Resources

The organizers met the costs of the Forum from three sources:

- The Canadian Partnerships Program of IDRC contributed an Events Grant to Carleton's 3ci, one of the organizing partners of the BFN. The IDRC grant co-financed costs of international travel and accommodation, management and co-ordination, case studies, and production of the report from the Forum.
- Individual participants contributed to their own costs, and/or secured funds form other institutional sources. These resources show an important commitment to the network-in-the making. Participants invested in the Forum, and this fact would be reflected in their contributions to both the case studies and the development of the network.
- COEP secured significant in-kind contributions. Notably, Furnas, host of the COEP secretariat, contributed all facilities and services required for the Forum, including simultaneous translation. Section 4.0 describes these resources in more detail.

The Forum more than met the expectations of the organizers and its participants. Those who took part judged the Forum to be an outstanding success; in its four days, they laid the organizational and programmatic foundation for an engaged, challenging and effective network.

2.0 Achievements

Forum participants readily identified signal achievements from their four days of work together. The account below elaborates the introductory "Highlights" of this report.

2.1 Participation by Members of Brazilian Communities

BFN promotes the active participation of *comunitário/as*[4] within its membership and its events. The presence of community members is a distinctive feature of the network. In two sessions of this Forum, three leaders of community organizations presented their stories of their work, their communities, and their achievements. All were women, and one is part of an emerging cadre of young community leaders. They came to the Forum from both rural and urban communities in Brazil, from the huge metropolis of Rio de Janeiro and from a small agricultural community in the state of Alagoas in the semi-arid zones of the Northeast. The immediacy of their stories infused the Forum with authenticity, dignity, and urgency.

The comunitárias took part in two sessions which opened and closed the part of the Forum built around case studies. The first, on the afternoon of Monday, Nov. 25, focused on the work of catadore/as and their organizations, and the ways in which universities and other allies can support them. This session, which followed the formal opening of the Forum, was co-organized with the Rio de Janeiro state network of COEP. (Forty-plus participants from that network joined the BFN Forum for the case-study portion of the agenda.) The second, on the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 27, examined COEP's Programa Comunidades Semiárido (PCSA), a fifteen-year initiative supporting social and economic development among rural communities in Northeastern Brazil.
The presentations of the comunitárias, and the accompanying commentary of public officials, university faculty, researchers and project staff in different organizations, together provide an insightful account of the achievements, challenges and agendas of these communities, their members and their organizations.

Following is a list of presentations made at these two sessions. Those with an asterisk (*) are currently unavailable. All available presentations made at the Forum can be found on the BFN section of COEP's website:
http://www.coepbrasil.org.br/portal/Publico/apresentarConteudo.aspx?CODIGO=C20131128123636921&TIPO_ID=1

Zilda Barreto da Silva, President of the "Rede de Recicla Rio", a network of five recycling co-operatives in Rio de Janeiro:
Rede Nacional de Empreendimentos Solidários RECICLA RIO - Zilda Barreto
("National Network of Solidarity Enterprises: Reciclario")

Andrea Bello, Ministry of the Environment, Rio de Janeiro state:
Catadores e Catadoras em Redes Solidárias do Estado do Rio de Janeiro *****
("Catadores and Catadoras in Solidarity Networks of Rio de Janeiro State")

Prof Jutta Gutberlet, University of São Paulo, Brazil, and University of Victoria, Canada:
Uma Visão Geral do Trabalho com Catadores e suas Organizações
("Working With Catadores: The participatory sustainable waste management experience")

Maria do Carmo Barbosa Oliveiro, catadora, Rio de Janeiro:
Cooperativa de Catadores de Brás de Pina—Coopquitungo, RJ *****
("The Cooperative of Catadores of Brás de Pina—Coopquitungo, RJ")

Maria da Conceição, comunitária, Quixabeira, Água Branca, Alagoas state:
Expectativas e Atuação dos Jovens Comunitários
("Expectations and Actions of Community Youth")

Guilherme Soares, Professor, UFRPE (Federal Rural University of Pernambuco)
Abordagem da Experiência do Projeto Universidades Cidadãs, o papel das Universidades
("Approach to the Experience of the Citizen Universities Project -- The role of universities")
A video on the Citizen Universities project is also available via the COEP/BFN link.

Marcos Carmona, Co-ordinator, Programa Comunidades Semiárido, COEP, Rio de Janeiro:
Comunidades Semiárido: Caminhos para o Futuro
("Communities of the Semiárido: Pathways to the Future")

Common themes stand out clearly from these analyses, despite the distances and different environments:

- *Effective leadership—skilled, resilient and creative—is of paramount importance*. These communities and their organizations (cooperatives, community associations) have benefitted greatly from the quality of leaders such those as who were present at the Forum. The emergence of such leaders often goes hand in hand with a growth in

individual and collective confidence and identity; the comunitárias at the Forum gave powerful accounts of taking part in a transformation of their lives, families, and communities.

> *Maria da Conceição Campos spoke of how one young man in Quixabeira, working with a group of one hundred people, "completely transformed our community in five years." They planted trees and rebuilt their well and water supply; revitalized cotton production, so that now they are selling semi-processed cotton directly to the factory; expanded their school and built a new health post. They learned to work collectively: "All of this we had to seek and construct together. We have learned about our rights, and about public policies." They have reached out to ten neighbouring communities, sharing the benefits of their own transformation. Perhaps the most far-reaching change of all is the fact that young people now stay in the community. Maria, a student teacher in the community school, described herself as "the fruit of this process of development within our community."*

Such changes are inspiring, and remarkable in communities often stigmatized and marginalized. As one listener remarked, "It's amazing what vision, passion and persistence can do." Yet changes of this kind are not automatic: the leadership qualities shown by women and young people in a community can benefit from a confident and welcoming response by established leadership, or from the support of sympathetic outsiders.[5]

- *Partnerships with external support agencies are critical success factors*. Both the network of catadores' cooperatives (Rede ReciclaRio) and the communities of the PCSA have built strong working relationships with a wide range of partners—university departments and institutes, government and parastatal agencies, private businesses, and foundations and CSOs. They worked together with a common purpose—supporting the catadores in creating "wealth in waste". These partners offer technical and organizational expertise; financial supports; information and contacts which are vital to marketing; access to innovative social technologies, and the like. As with the growth of capable leadership within communities, effective institutional partnerships do not appear overnight. They require receptive and responsive leadership and organizational cultures within the external agencies, characteristics which may in turn require a catalyst to flourish; they usually benefit from progressive public policies; and they require negotiating and relationship-building skills from community leaders as well. (The latter may of course be encouraged by sympathetic individual and organizational supporters.)
- *Creative use of technologies old and new*. The case studies showcased a diverse array of new and old technologies. These includes drought-resistant and fast-

maturing varieties of cotton; organic coloured cotton; chemical-free methods of pest control; purpose-built scaled-down workshops for cleaning, combing and baling cotton within communities; in-ground dams and rain-fed cisterns; computers with broadband satellite feed; community telecommunication centres, institutional and national networks; and extensive community use of video (hand-held & cellphone) and website technology. To be used effectively, all of these require institutions which are both technically capable and socially responsive, ***and*** community members young and old who are ready to use and adapt these tools. Both were present in all the case studies.

- *Progressive public policies* are no guarantee of an enabling environment for communities and their supporters, but are decidedly better than hostile public policies. Sympathetic political leaders at local, state and national levels can be a great help as well, in mobilizing political resources to put progressive policy into practice. Both the catadore/as of Rio de Janeiro state and the communities within the PCSA have benefited from progressive policies and supportive individuals. Even where these exist, however, systematic education may be required to ensure that community members know their rights and understand access routes to services. (The video on the Universidades Cidadãs network underscores this point.)

Even where communities enjoy effective leaders, supportive partnerships, powerful technologies and progressive public policies, their vulnerabilities are all too evident:

- For rural agricultural communities in a region like the Semiárido, capricious and difficult weather is a fact of life: the challenge remains "*Convivência com a seca*" – "Coexistence with drought." The counterpart to drought may be floods, and the ever-present threat of destructive pests.
- Catadores and catadoras in São Paulo face a fundamental threat to their organizations and livelihoods, in the form of a political choice to invest in incinerating the city's solid waste. This decision would radically reduce the supply of solid waste, and hence reduce the market for recycled waste.
- Even if progressive policies remain in place, changes in the leadership or cultures of the institutions charged with implementing them may shift rapidly and dramatically—responsiveness and accessibility are never guaranteed.
- Both rural and urban communities are vulnerable to volatile prices for the products they buy and sell. The onset of the global financial crisis in 2008 was marked by a collapse in the price paid to catadores for used cardboard, for example. Small farmers in the Northeast always have to contend with prices shaped by weather, pests, and international dumping.

2.2 The BFN Can Convene a Conversation Including Both Community Members and Representatives of the Office of the Presidency: The participation of comunitárias in the Forum in turn highlighted a rare asset of the BFN; this social bridge extends to researchers, teachers and students from universities, as well as to members of CSOs and public agencies. This capability rests on legitimacy, credibility and contacts at the macro, meso and micro levels of society. It was evident in the participants at the Forum, which included a senior colleague of the head of the Office of the Presidency, and in the planned and potential collaborations among network members described in Section 3.0 of this report.

2.3 Case Studies Grounded in Practical Knowledge and Experience: BFN members presented a wide variety of case studies. Offering relevance and depth, these extended and complemented the themes and issues identified in the cases above.

Crystal Tremblay, of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, analysed the use of participatory video with and by the catadora/es of São Paulo and their organizations. Her presentation, "Empowerment and Communication in São Paulo, Brazil: Participatory Video with Recycling Cooperatives," is accessible via the link to the COEP/BFN page.

This case is grounded in the same Participatory Sustainable Waste Management program described by Jutta Gutberlet. Focusing on the catadores' use of participatory video as a tool for negotiating policy with public authorities, it parallels and reinforces the experience of Zilda Barreto and ReciclaRio. The power of video is that it enables both public officials and the catadores to *see* the reality of the catadores: "The collectors are the ones who speak." When they do so, people listening can see themselves differently. As one official said, "I am the *lixeiro*[6]—I am the one who produces the garbage. It's the catadores who recycle it."

The catadoras' use of video as a tool for reflection, mobilization and confidence-building meshed nearly with the experience of the young men and women within the communities of COEP's Programa Comunidades Semiárido. For these young people in rural communities of the Northeast, computer technology and more recently video have provided a vehicle for learning, for communication and for recoding the histories of their communities. From this common experience arose an evident opportunity for collaboration (noted in the list of possible program activities in Section 3.0 below.)

BFN members from CASRI (Caribbean Self-Reliance International, based in Canada) and Twezimbe offered analyses of initiatives in Guyana and Uganda aimed at strengthening small farmers' livelihoods:

Abigail Moriah, Toronto, Canada (for CASRI):

Empreendimentos Comunitários, Liderança e Transformação em Comunidades da Guiana

("Community Enterprise, Leadership and Transformation in Guyanese Communities")

Andrew Ssemwanga, Twezimbe, Kampala, Uganda:
Incubadoras para Desenvolvimento de Pequenos Agronegócios
("CURAD: Incubators for Small Agribusiness Development")

These studies identified themes similar to those highlighted in the catadore/as' experience—the importance of progressive public policy; of responsive institutions, such as CSOs and universities; of the resilience of farmers, young people and community members, and their readiness to seize opportunities. Describing Uganda's incubator methodology to support farmers as small-scale entrepreneurs, Andrew Ssemwanga observed that policy influence came from "partners learning together with transparency and trust." His account prompted people in the audience to make a comparison with Brazil's network of incubators for popular co-operatives. In addition, however, another key theme emerged, one which will surely be prominent in BFN's future: the necessity of responding to damage of severe climatic events. CASRI's case study, for example, explored the imperative of a rapid and viable vehicle for rebuilding the incomes of small famers whose fields had been destroyed by flooding. In this instance, a novel technology, hydroponic shade-house horticulture, has shown solid potential, and farmers have responded with enthusiasm.

The vulnerability and resilience of communities in the face of climate change was the focus of a presentation by members of COEP, FIOCRUZ (the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation), and the Working Group on Climate Change, Poverty and Inequality of the Brazilian Forum on Climate Change[7]. See, on the COEP website page listed above:

Gleyse Peiter, COEP, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil:
Comunidades: Mudanças climáticas, vulnerabilidade e adaptação
("Communities: Climate Change, Vulnerability and Adaptation")

Michelle Bonatti, COEP and the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina:
Comunidade da Tapera: Entre o mangue e o mar *****
("The Community of Tapera: Between the Mangroves and the Sea") *****

Andrea Vanini, FIOCRUZ Mata Atlântica Campus, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil:
Pesquisa "Mudanças climáticas, desigualdades sociais e populações vulneráveis no Brasil: construindo capacidades" *****
(Research on Climate Change, Social Inequalities and Vulnerable Populations: Building capacities")

Brazilian organizations (both CSOs and public entities) have emphasized the necessity of building national strategies for adaptation which respond to the vulnerability of communities, while building on their capabilities. COEP's own response is based on an analysis

undertaken jointly with communities, a university and a public research institute, and is directed towards a national policymaking forum.

Two accounts of building and maintaining networks, one national and one international, completed the ensemble of case studies. On the COEP/BFN page above, see:

> Ted Jackson, 3ci, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada:
> *Comunidades em Primeiro Lugar: Impacto do Engajamento da Comunidade*
> ("Building Stronger Communities for Better Futures: The CFICE Project in Canada")
>
> Marek Wozinski and Mohamed Abdalla, UCP-SARnet, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ:
> *Empoderamento para a Paz através de Lideranças em Agronegócio e Sustentabilidade*
> ("EmPeace LABS: Empowerment for Peace through Leadership in Agribusiness and Sustainability")

CFICE (Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement) is a multi-year project which aims to strengthen communities through action research on best practices in university-community collaboration. Begun in 2012, it incorporates a nationwide network of 250 leaders in CSOs and universities using action research to examine and disseminate partnership and policy strategies to reduce poverty, promote food security and environmental sustainability, and to combat violence against women. A separate hub of the broader network is responsible for each theme; Carleton's 3ci co-ordinates the ensemble. CFICE is co-funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and by Carleton University.

UCP-SARnet (University-Community Partnerships Social Action Research network), an international online network, seeks to educate a new generation of community leaders and to promote cross-sectoral dialogue and community-engaged research. Established in 2006 with its secretariat function at Arizona State University, it now counts some 1700 affiliated students, university faculty and community activists in 75 countries. Its organizational members, about 70 in number in the Americas, Africa, and Asia-Pacific, include coalitions and associations, foundations, research institutes and NGOs. The centrepiece of its programming is the annual EmPeace LABS training workshop for community leaders-in-the-making, organized by UCP-SARnet and two Indian partners, the Gandhi Research Foundation and Jain Irrigations Systems Ltd.

Salient lessons for the BFN emerge from these two case studies. They include the following, which informed the discussions of network development at the Forum:

- One can start the network without much money, drawing on commitment and in-house resources. (In its early days, for example, UCP-SARnet relied heavily on the interest, energy and commitment of students.) This has benefits—it allows the

network to draw on members' commitment, and to establish a track record of activities and results at modest financial cost.

- On the other hand, it soon becomes apparent that a substantial investment in infrastructure (such as a well-designed and spacious website) is imperative, as is a fulltime Executive-Secretary function. Some infrastructural costs may by in-kind commitments from key member organizations, but this arrangement is no more than an interim measure.
- There are real benefits to be had by building on the credibility, experience and relationships of established networks. Within CFICE, for example, the Vibrant Communities network, now well over a decade old, is responsible for the Poverty Reduction hub of the program. At the same time, the new network must show its own distinctive value. The BFN Forum reflects a similar logic: CFICE and UCP-SARnet are key participants, as well as COEP.
- BFN members should be clear about institutional limits and pitfalls. There are few positive professional and operational incentives for university faculty to work with CSOs and community organizations, for example, and cultural and administrative hindrances are all too common. (The presentation examining the experience of the Universidades Cidadãs network acknowledges these as well.) This issue underlies a recommended future program initiative of the BFN, noted in Section 3.0.

2.4 Emergence of a New Generation of Community Leaders: Case studies showed that a new generation of leaders is taking shape and taking responsibility in communities and their organizations, especially among women and young people. The comunitárias' presence at the Forum showed the importance and the power of this change.

A comparable change took place within the BFN itself. In the latter part of the Forum, the sessions following the case studies, younger members seized the opportunity to join the Management Committee of the BFN, accepting responsibility for a range of immediate and ongoing tasks and functions. The organizing group for the network and the Forum had hoped for such a change, while knowing that it was not assured.

The expanded Management Committee of the BFN now includes:
Andre Spitz, COEP, Brazil
Gleyse Peiter, COEP, Brazil
Ted Jackson, Carleton University, Canada
Andrew Ssemwanga, Twezimbe, Uganda
Michelle Bonatti, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina
Crystal Tremblay, University of British Columbia, Canada
Abigail Moriah, CASRI, Canada

2.5 Affirmation of Common Cause and Partnership among BFN Members: The initiative taken by the new members of the Management Committee highlighted a growing sense of partnership and common cause among BFN members, created over the four days of the Forum. There were other signs of this as well:

- Participants from established networks (such as the UPC-SARnet) were generous with their advice, readily sharing their experience.
- All participants shared the tasks of co-ordination and recording during the Forum, and took responsibility for followup action.
- Participants voted with their feet to take part in the Forum. As the financial report shows, BFN members-in-the-making substantially self-financed their presence at the Forum.
- Participants generated creative ideas within the sessions on network development, and showed a readiness to engage, challenge and reflect with each other. As a result, the new Management Committee has a healthy stock of pending actions and ideas for the governance, programming and resourcing of the network.

2.6 Significant Engagement by Participants in the Development of the BFN: All this added up to significant engagement and movement on key issues in the development of the BFN. Participants showed their interest and commitment by thoughtfully addressing issues highlighted in the Draft Mid-Term Program Plan for the BFN (circulated beforehand by the organizing group.) The issues at hand included guiding principles for governance (including membership) and management; for programming; and resourcing. Participants identified the following priorities:

- A working group to formulate a clear and succinct statement of focus and purpose for the BFN. This will build on but not restrict itself to the existing emphasis on livelihoods (work and income) and active citizenship, and take account of different formulations of the role of the network and its level of operation.
- A statement of guiding principles on membership, including:
  - ⇒ Network members will be individuals, many or most based in organizations. We should seek to build a diverse membership of both.
  - ⇒ The network will thus have multiple types of members, including: core organizations with a founding or funding role; associated organizations (including networks) with common interests; and individuals.
  - ⇒ We are seeking people and organizations who will not only benefit from membership, but also bring something to the BFN—a commitment to build and sustain the network, to contribute to its continuity.
  - ⇒ The network will need a host, an anchor. The group agreed that COEP was the obvious choice to play this role.
- A strategy for outreach, recruitment and marketing using photos and video as well as text, to create tools for both individual and public outreach. Prompted by the experience of networks such as CFICE, members were eager to use planned

conferences, similar meetings and webinars to introduce the BFN to members of other organizations and networks. These would complement public launch events in Brazil and Canada.

- A coherent and manageable approach to programming: focusing in the short-to-medium term on gathering and distributing existing knowledge of (for example) community economic development. (The initiatives and ideas listed separately in Section 3.0 below are examples of this.) In the medium to longer term, as the BFN consolidates itself, the network will expand this distributive role and create new knowledge from the experience of communities and their allies.
- A resourcing strategy echoing the two-stage approach to programming: In the short term, this would mean relying on existing resources (such as in-kind contributions) among member organizations to build a track record of results and relationships with new constituencies. As one member put it, "We can develop the network without money." In the medium to longer term, it is clear that the BFN will have to secure new financial resources to invest in the electronic infrastructure and co-ordinating personnel which the network will need. At all times, however, the BFN will avoid competing with its members for scarce resources. Instead, the network will seek resources for activities not otherwise available to its members.

2.7 Greater Clarity on the Distinctiveness of the Better Futures Network:

The deliberations in the Forum enabled participants to develop clarity on the distinctiveness of the BFN in relation international networks in the community-university engagement space.

First, the BFN focuses on a unique combination of domains and themes, namely: livelihoods, citizenship, climate change and social technology.

Second, community members participate in network activities alongside university and CSO leaders, as was the case in the Forum itself.

Third, the BFN seeks to engage policymakers from the outset, as evidenced by the participation in the Forum of the representative of the Office of the President of brazil, and in COEP's own model of engaging major public-sector organizations—companies, foundations, research and funding bodies.

Fourth, the emphasis on social application of technology and incubators is a core feature of the BFN.

Finally, the primary locus of coordination of the network is in Brazil. This leadership is advantageous to Brazil and to network members from other countries.

3.0 Next Steps

During the final sessions of the Forum, a core group comprising Brazilian and international participants addressed key issues of network development, including the BFN's agenda for 2014. They generated both guidelines and detailed recommendations, which the organizing group for the Forum built into a Management Committee Work Plan after the Forum. The main points in that plan include the following.

3.1 Programming

Participants proposed diverse and numerous programming ideas throughout the Forum. By the time it ended, several specific activities were in play. Some were bilateral collaborations, while others would embrace the network as a whole. Nearly all included outreach to other organizations and networks. Here is a partial list:

- Webinars on members' activities, findings, lessons and models, organized through members' existing technology platforms.
- A linkage between COEP and CASRI, bringing together community members, support institutions and policymakers in Brazil and Guyana, focusing on food security and community-based agricultural enterprise.
- An exchange between members of COEP (working with communities in the Northeast) and the Universities of Victoria and British Columbia, on the use of participatory video.
- A linkage or mini-forum among senior officials in the Offices of the Presidency in South Africa, Brazil and Ghana, on monitoring and evaluating national programs promoting citizens' participation in governance and social programs. The project would also include a Canadian university component related to monitoring and evaluation.
- Following the participation of senior members of Carleton's administration, COEP and 1125@carleton.ca have agreed to build a partnership using incubators and networking to promote social and technical innovation. This partnership would link to the BFN as a whole. One suggested activity is a mini-forum on social technology incubators, including Brazil, Canada, the US, South Africa, and Uganda, possibly to be hosted by 1125@carleton.ca. The anchor unit for COEP in this work would be the Herbert de Souza Laboratory for Technology and Citizenship, in the Graduate Faculty of Engineering at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.
- A related opportunity exists for COEP, BFN, and 1125@carleton.ca to collaborate in producing a special issue of the *Technology, Innovation and Management Review*, on social technology and social enterprise incubators. *TIMReview* is an open-source journal based at Carleton.
- A survey of community organizations/co-operatives and public policy on solid waste management, recycling and economic linkages in countries within the BFN membership. This may include extending work now being done in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro to the Northeast.

- Both the survey of work with catadores' organizations and public policy on waste management/local economic development, and the idea of a linkage among Offices of the Presidency could be the basis of workshops by the BFN at the Dec. 2014 meeting of the Talloires Network, scheduled for Cape Town, South Africa. BFN members will take part in that meeting, which will thus offer an opportunity to introduce the BFN to a wider audience.
- BFN will convene a workshop/panel to bring together IDRC and other funders (USA & UK, for example), and members of other networks (e.g., GACER, GUNi, Talloires) to examine methods and best practices for funders to support collaboration between communities and their organizations, universities, and research organizations. This workshop could also take place at the Talloires conference in December 2014.
- BFN members will be invited to play an active role in CUExpo 2015, which will be held in Ottawa in May 2015, with the overall theme of citizen-driven policy solutions through community-campus engagement.
- There may be opportunities for BFN to convene national granting councils in Canada, Brazil, South Africa, India and elsewhere to share experiences and models for funding community-university partnerships.

3.2 Network Development

- Reporting on the November 2013 Forum: The Management Committee agreed to complete the Report on the November 2013 Forum by mid-February 2014. This report, to donors such as IDRC, will also serve as a source for shorter and more public reports to be used in promoting the BFN and in recruiting new members.
- The Management Group of fundadores has built a work plan to guide the Management Committee of continuadores[8] for the period January 2 – March 31, 2014. The Committee agreed on an Executive Secretary for the network, based in Brazil (with COEP) with support in 3ci at Carleton.
- An electronic infrastructure is being built: a BFN listserv is under construction, using the various mailing lists built since November 2012; members' profiles are being posted, and materials from the Forum (such as presentations) are now posted on the BFN page of COEP's website.
- Guided by principles agreed in the Forum, working groups have taken on key tasks, including:
  - ⇒ Drafting a succinct and clear statement of purpose and focus for the network;
  - ⇒ Elaborating the overall approach to program development.
- Some important issues have been put off until mid-2014, both to make the immediate workload more manageable, and to create information (such as promotional materials, listservs and member profiles) to be used later. Prominent among these key tasks are the design and implementation of a separate website for the BFN (and with that, the related issue of a language policy), as well as a recruitment campaign for new members.

3.3 Resourcing the Network

- The agreed overall approach to program development shapes the approach to resourcing the network:
  - ⇒ In the coming 12-plus months, the BFN will look in the first instance to its internal resources. In addition, the parties to any given activity are expected to generate the resources they need. This latter principle will remain as a working principle for the BFN – as part of the contribution expected by new members as well as current ones.
  - ⇒ During this period (i.e., 2014), the Management Committee will explore opportunities and cultivate relationships with potential funders for the medium to longer term – external sources of funds for both programming and infrastructure. These sources will include research councils, foundations, and both private- and public-sector organizations, in the Global North and the Global South.
- Nevertheless, an investment in infrastructure ***will*** be needed as soon as possible, notably to cover costs of an Executive Secretary. These resources could be in-kind (a supportive institution allocating person-time, for example) or financial.

4.0 Resourcing the Forum

4.1 IDRC Budget and Performance to Budget

The Canadian Partnerships Program of IDRC co-funded the Forum with an Events Grant of $15,000. This grant covered costs related to participants' travel and accommodation, management and co-ordination, and production of the record of the Forum, including case studies and translation. IDRC's commitment helped participants and organizers to leverage substantial revenues and in-kind contributions from other sources. These are summarized in Table 1 below.

The IDRC budget will be fully expended. Final accounting is being completed at time of writing, and the financial report will be submitted to IDRC before the end of March.

4.2 Summary of Resources from Other Sources

Table 1 below lists other resources generated and contributed by Forum participants. These include:

- Funds from other institutional sources
- Personal funds (self-financing)
- In-kind contributions, with a monetary estimate.

Table 1: Summary of Resources from Other Sources *(All figures $ Cdn)*

Institutional Funds	***Personal Funds***	***In-kind Contributions, Estimated Value***
25,655, of which Furnas: $17,325	**7,691**	**93,500**

Readers should note that the figures presented here aggregate individual participants' records and estimates. The exception is the monetary value of Furnas' contribution of all meeting facilities.

The significant institutional and personal financial contributions, combined with the substantial in-kind contributions, show both the real costs of a Forum of this kind, and members' commitment to the network.

It should be noted that these figures in Table 1 are conservative (i.e., low) estimates, as they are based on information from two-thirds of the Brazilian and international BFN members at the Forum. Nevertheless, the combination of IDRC funds and resources from other sources provides a reasonable estimate of the actual cost of an event like the Forum.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Participants' Evaluation of the Forum

Following is a summary of comments offered by participants at the end of the Forum.

Highlights

- Learning about the work of catadore/as and their organizations. Also about COEP-- its leadership, innovation, and work with communities in the Northeast. In both cases, people have made remarkable achievements. The intergenerational impact of the work was inspiring.
- The presence and participation of community members. They made powerful interventions.
- The diversity of knowledge and experience -- the program was driven by important themes and issues, viewed from different perspectives. Presentations offered thoughtful and in-depth analysis. The lessons of some case studies, such as the analysis of work with catadores, are transferable to other countries.
- The use of video and photography in the case-study presentations, and in the record of the Forum itself.
- New opportunities for collaboration.

What worked really well

- The meeting was very well prepared and organized – the sessions were well structured, and fitted together well. The reporters from each session did their work well. A high level of interest and engagement throughout.
- The facilities were very good, both the meeting space and services, and the hotel.
- The simultaneous translation was very good.
- A good combination of people from university circles, communities, and CSOs.
- COEP hosted the participants so well. They deserve a vote of thanks.

Reflections on developing the BFN

- We had strong cohesion in the group, working with synergy towards a common goal. It felt good to move from emails to face-to-face collaboration and exchange.
- We made progress on clarifying the BFN—its purpose and focus, structures and an agenda for the future. We can start now—we have to start now. Ensure we are clear about followup tasks, and have designated contacts people for each.
- The Monday morning pre-meeting was very useful, an opportunity to introduce ourselves, our questions and interest in the BFN.
- The network development sessions were well prepared and chaired, and gave us enough time to examine the issues.

Suggestions for improvement

- Visits to a community and/or social technology sites would enhance the case studies.
- Receiving the case studies before the meeting would make for more participation.
- More time for informal conversation and networking.
- More small-group work.
- More people from more countries.
- More people from community organizations, and more students. More opportunity for younger leaders.
- Creative ways to overcome language barriers? For example, more videos and photographs.
- A Brazilian cultural introduction as a social event.

A followup email echoed these assessments: “Thank you so much for the opportunity to join this meeting – it really is an extraordinary group of talented and seasoned people, and the discussions have been terrific. It has been a privilege to be part of this.”

5.2 Reviewing the Objectives of the Forum

The headlines of the three objectives of the Forum were:

1) to stimulate learning and knowledge production;
2) to develop the network as an organization; and
3) to build a partnership among prospective network members.

On the evidence of this report, including the assessments of participants, the organizers and members of the Forum have substantially achieved all three objectives. In doing so, they have laid the foundation of the Better Futures Network.

Section 3.0 above, "Next Steps", describes the short-to-medium term agenda for the BFN. There are indications of future outcomes:

- Collaborations now being planned among members point to case-study knowledge being extended and transferred.
- There is potential for policy impact as well. Forum participants began exploring a linkage among Offices of the Presidency in Brazil, South Africa, and Ghana, with Canadian university support.
- In the field of network development, the BFN has a new, larger and younger Management Committee, with a clear work plan for the first two quarters of 2014.

Concluding Observations

The power and eloquence of the comunitárias led one member to observe that, if the BFN works wisely, creating space and platforms for community members, the network can enable "the invisible to be seen".

Scepticism among community members should remind us of the need for humility, however. Another member recalled the words of the chief of a community in Tanzania: "We don't need outside experts. We need a dialogue."

On the wall of a meeting room in Furnas:

Speak, and I will forget;
Teach me, and I might be able to remember;
Involve me, and I will learn.
Benjamin Franklin [here, translated from the Portuguese]

Do what you can
With what you have,
Where you are.

Faça o que puder,
Com o que tiver,
Onde estiver
Theodore Roosevelt

-- end --

[1] The Brazilian word for community members, male and female. The guidelines for case studies at the Forum included participation by community members. In this first Forum, the community participants were Brazilian, working with Brazilian organizations which were part of the Forum.

[2] The Brazilian word for the people who recycle waste sent to municipal landfill sites, reclaiming and selling usable products.

[3] The Brazilian Forum on Climate Change is a mandated advisory council to the President of the Republic. COEP is a member of the Forum, and at the request of the Executive Secretary, co-ordinates its Working Group on Climate Change, Poverty, and Inequality.

[4] The Brazilian word for community members, male and female. The guidelines for case studies at the Forum included participation by community members. In this first Forum, the community participants were Brazilian, working with Brazilian organizations which were part of the Forum.

[5] In the Programa Comunidades Semiárido, for example, COEP established Mobilizing Committees which worked with community associations in mobilizing support for the different projects, and in communicating with external support agencies. The six members on these Committees had to include at least two women and two young people, as well as the president of the Community Association. With the experience they gained from serving on the Committees, women and youth rapidly took a much greater part in community affairs.

[6] "The garbage man," in Portuguese.

[7] There are interlocking memberships and roles here. FIOCRUZ has been a key organizational member of COEP since its inception, and is a member of the Brazilian Forum on climate Change. COEP is also a member of the Forum on Climate Change, and co-ordinates its Working Group on Climate Change, Poverty, and Inequality.

[8] "Fundadores" are founders; "continuadores", those who continue. The new Management Committee comprises three members of the organizing group for the Forum, and several younger members of the BFN who stepped forward during the Forum.