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# Formation and Enhancement of Collective Identity in the Leadership of Inter-organizational Networks: A Theoretical Foundation

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## Abstract

The concept of identity and its prominent role in shaping and stimulating individual, team, and organizational behavior has long been at the center of scholarly attention. However, its application within the domain of inter-organizational network leadership remains relatively underexplored. The limited number of existing studies in this area have primarily emphasized the importance of identity in guiding the behavior of inter-organizational networks, while paying comparatively less attention to the mechanisms through which identity is constructed. Accordingly, this study aims to provide a theoretical foundation that highlights the mechanisms underlying identity formation in the context of inter-organizational network leadership. It does so by first categorizing key success factors into two broad groups—primary factors and emergent factors—and then proposing a more comprehensive framework that integrates these components. The discussion also addresses the challenges and risks associated with the formation of collective identity in inter-organizational network leadership. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for organizational leaders to reconsider and transform their understanding of evolving concepts such as leadership, governance, power, identity, and knowledge in highly turbulent and volatile environments that characterize contemporary knowledge-based organizations, where agility and adaptability increasingly take precedence over stability and continuity.

**Keywords:** *Proactivity, Collective Identity, Leadership, Inter-organizational Network.*

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## Introduction

Inter-organizational networks can be regarded as the vital arteries and remarkable phenomena of the contemporary world. Today, the emergence of mega-systems and mega-technologies—which play a pivotal role in shaping modern human civilization—are the outcomes of processes and practices that unfold within these networks. Nevertheless, despite the significant advances made in the leadership and management of inter-organizational networks, scholarly knowledge in the theoretical domain has not evolved in parallel with practical developments. In particular, the mechanisms employed to lead and manage such networks are fundamentally different from those commonly used in governing traditional hierarchical organizations.

In this study, an initial overview of the trajectory of theorizing on inter-organizational network leadership is presented, followed by an examination of how "collective identity" is formed within such networks. Subsequently, the key success factors for strengthening and advancing collective identity are discussed. Before engaging with the main subject, however, several preliminary considerations must be highlighted:

1. Managers' perceptions and understandings of concepts such as leadership, power, identity, governance, and knowledge significantly influence the way they govern their organizations.

2. Such perceptions have often been shaped under conditions where organizations enjoyed a relatively stable external environment.

3. With increasing complexity and turbulence in today's organizational environments, organizational agility and adaptability take precedence over organizational stability.

4. The very nature of the aforementioned concepts changes substantially when organizations face intense environmental turbulence and complexity—where agility and adaptability must prevail over stability—compared to when stability is assumed.

5. When agility, flexibility, and responsiveness to environmental changes become the foremost priorities of leaders and managers, the concepts of leadership, identity, governance, power, and even knowledge evolve and converge; under certain circumstances, leadership and identity may even be used interchangeably.

6. Considering these dynamics, contemporary organizational leaders and managers are compelled to continuously refine and advance their understanding of these concepts in order to achieve organizational mastery and effectiveness.

At its core, this article attempts to delve into and address the following question: "How does collective identity come into being and subsequently enhance in the context of inter-organizational networks".

## Literature Review

Following the publication of several scholarly articles derived from empirical approaches in specialized journals, IBM undertook an initiative in 2014 by engaging five university professors to compile a 130-page volume entitled "Inter-Organizational Networks ", which synthesized the research published up to that time. A few years later, a specialized task force affiliated with the World Economic Forum produced, after two years of continuous work, a scientific report entitled "Systems Leadership and Platforms" in 2018.

In 2019, the Harvard Kennedy School published a more comprehensive report entitled "Systems Leadership for Sustainable Development". Subsequently, in 2020, two distinguished scholars authored a book titled "Network Governance: Concepts, Theories, and Applications". Finally, in 2022, a group of contributors published two volumes: "Leadership and Performance in Public Sector Networks" and "Network Leadership: Navigating and Shaping Our Inter-Connected World."

Recent studies in network governance emphasize the critical role of leadership in shaping and sustaining inter-organizational networks. Raab et al (2021) demonstrate that "leadership hubs" act as focal points of power and decision-making, influencing coordination among diverse actors. Agranoff (2020) analyzes practical lessons from inter-governmental collaborations, highlighting methods to maintain network dynamism and enhance member engagement. Similarly, Crosby and Bryson (2019) stress the importance of value-based leadership and a shared vision, which strengthen network cohesion. In contrast, Saz-Carranza and Ospina (2020) explore the paradoxes of leadership in multi-actor networks, showing that balancing unity and diversity is a central challenge. Finally, empirical evidence from Bodin and Crona (2020) indicates that trust, shared culture, and emotional motivation are crucial for network resilience, especially in complex domains such as environmental governance. Together, these studies suggest that the success of inter-organizational networks depends not only on structure and resources but also on leadership quality, social interactions, and alignment of shared values and goals.

## Theoretical Foundation

For a deeper understanding of the concept of inter-organizational network leadership and for elucidating its underlying rationale, one may draw upon the logic embedded in entrepreneurship-related concepts. As noted by Lichtenstein and Lyons (2020), entrepreneurship involves processes of opportunity creation, resource mobilization, and collective guidance. Building on this reasoning, network leadership can similarly be viewed as a process that entails envisioning opportunities, mobilizing diverse organizational resources, and orchestrating collective action toward shared goals.

The concept of entrepreneurship, whether at the individual, team, or

organizational level, encompasses various components. Despite differences of opinion among scholars regarding the number and diversity of these components, there is general agreement on three key elements: “innovation”, “risk-taking”, and “proactivity”.

Among these three dimensions, proactivity is primary and even dominant over the other two dimensions, namely innovation and risk-taking. This is because, without proactivity, it is not possible to activate or direct the innovation and risk-taking dimensions (Covin & Wales, 2022).

In fact, proactivity can be regarded as the “locomotive” of the other two dimensions, since by leveraging proactivity, environmental opportunities can be identified earlier than competitors, and efforts can be directed toward exploiting the discovered opportunities. Here, one may recall the initiative of a Japanese automobile company in identifying and capitalizing on an opportunity that ultimately led to the production of a dual-fuel electric and fossil-fuel vehicle.

In the above case, the company’s research and development team, by exploring the environmental conditions and acting as a driving force (proactivity component), was able to identify a significant opportunity in the form of a potentially high-yield market for the development of a dual-fuel electric–fossil vehicle. The team, through feasibility studies, confirmed the company’s capabilities and capacity to capture such a lucrative market. Subsequently, the company mobilized its innovative capacities, accepted potential risks, and, through nine years of remarkable (innovative and risk-taking) effort, succeeded in producing the intended vehicle. This example clearly demonstrates how the proactivity component can effectively mobilize organizational resources—both knowledge-based and material—in creating extraordinary and transformative performance outcomes. Here, the aforementioned logic, which has been primarily addressed in the entrepreneurship literature, can be extended and applied to explain the quality of leadership in inter-organizational networks.

Understanding the existential philosophy of leadership in inter-organizational networks is impossible without acknowledging the pivotal element of proactivity. In other words, the essence of proactivity is deeply embedded in the very fabric of network leadership and has become its most strategic form of capital. Through this vital asset, network leadership is able to craft an aspirational and promising vision for the entire network — a vision that may appear astonishing, if not unattainable, to many participating organizations. Indeed, it is through the creation of such an ambitious and inspiring vision that network leadership generates the motivation and energy necessary for other organizations to join the network. By establishing this vision — made possible through the component of proactivity — the path is paved for various forms of innovative activity, and the notion of risk-taking becomes both rational and meaningful.

## Leadership in Inter-Organizational Networks

The focal point of leadership in inter-organizational networks can be defined as an individual or a knowledge hub possessing rich expertise and abundant financial resources. In this context, a knowledge hub can be understood as an organization or node that facilitates the creation, sharing, and integration of knowledge across network members, thereby enhancing collective learning and innovation within the network (Sørensen et al., 2010). Based on this conceptualization, the focal point, relying on its extensive knowledge base, strives to define an exceptionally attractive opportunity or an ideal state over a long-term horizon. To achieve this, it engages a diverse set of organizations—each currently pursuing its own distinct path—through extensive consultations and the use of various formal and informal communication methods, detaching them from their current trajectories and encouraging their participation in the designed network to realize the envisioned ideal state.

Thus, through the foresight and comprehensive support of the leadership focal point, a set of organizations that are potentially capable of joining the network is identified, and each, by disengaging from its previous trajectory, enters the network within a specified timeframe.

The selection of candidates for network membership is carried out in such a way that each possesses the necessary talents and resources—including human, knowledge, and physical resources—as well as the required motivation, and can contribute to complementing the capacities of other network members. This synergy of capacities constitutes a fundamental condition for the sustainability of inter-organizational networks (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2020).

Network leadership seeks to establish meaningful bilateral or multilateral connections among organizations committed to achieving a desired ideal state, fostering a culture of collaboration and joint effort among network members. Beyond this, it facilitates the active flow of knowledge exchanges across the network, while maintaining protective and security measures to prevent sensitive information from leaking to competitors. Simultaneously, while managing knowledge flows among the nodes within the network, network leadership endeavors to continuously and dynamically drive transformation and enhance the performance of each member, while also improving the relationships among them.

Following the establishment of the network and the unfolding of its activities, new leadership hubs within the network will emerge. These hubs comprise the organizations that take the lead in generating new knowledge, thereby exerting accelerating effects on other parts of the network. As evidenced by Raab et al. (2021), leadership in networks is inherently distributed, and new leadership hubs tend to emerge and evolve over time. Drawing upon this empirical insight, it can be expected that, in addition to the primary leadership hub in inter-organizational

networks, secondary or emergent leadership hubs will also materialize at the network level.

### **Detailed Explanation of Collective Identity Formation**

To elucidate how collective identity is formed in inter-organizational network leadership, an attempt is made to illustrate the fundamental principles by depicting a hypothetical scenario and reducing the number of network members to just two hypothetical organizations, “A” and “B,” as outlined below.

1. Prior to joining the network, each of the two hypothetical organizations, “A” and “B,” operated within a predetermined, traditional trajectory. The network leadership hub, by monitoring environmental developments, identifies the potential competencies of these two organizations in terms of possessing the necessary resources and motivation to join the network. It then endeavors, through establishing multiple formal and informal communications with the heads of each organization, to persuade them of the attractiveness and benefits of entering the network’s trajectory to achieve the desired ideal state and capitalize on golden opportunities. The aim is to convince each organization to deviate from its traditional, predetermined path and align with the network’s course of action.

2. From this point onward, each of the two organizations, “A” and “B,” must undertake substantial changes—under the guidance of the network leadership hub—in their structures, processes, systems, and even organizational cultures, centered around participation in the network. In other words, a necessary condition for joining the network is the implementation of internal changes and transformations within both organizations. As emphasized by Marquis and Tilcsik (2020), reconfiguring organizational identity constitutes a fundamental requirement for achieving alignment with a network’s collective identity. Building on this perspective, such reconfiguration serves as the foundation for sustained collaboration and strategic coherence within the inter-organizational network.

3. In addition to the changes and transformations within each of the two organizations “A” and “B,” they must endeavor, under the guidance of the network’s leadership hub and through the establishment of a set of formal and informal connections, to build strong and meaningful ties between themselves. Ultimately, by sharing resources—including knowledge resources, financial resources, and even physical assets—they can achieve robust collaboration and cooperation.

4. For the establishment of such relationships, the presence of primary factors is essential. These include the commitment and positive outlook of the leaders of both organizations toward this collaboration, the allocation of sufficient time and necessary resources, a reasonable level of mutual trust and goodwill, the creation of both linear and non-linear processes for building strong ties between the two

organizations, the anticipation of mechanisms for timely identification and resolution of potential conflicts and disputes, as well as other necessary arrangements.

5. The executives of both organizations must demonstrate strong commitment and dedication to ensure that a natural and meaningful flow of knowledge emerges between them in pursuit of the network's envisioned state and strategic objectives. Recent literature has emphasized that establishing "knowledge-sharing infrastructures" constitutes the backbone of collective identity formation in inter-organizational networks (Foss et al., 2021).

6. In the course of establishing meaningful connections and linkages between the two organizations, it can be expected that a spectrum of different types of ties will emerge. One category consists of ties formed between specific individuals in organizations "A" and "B." If such ties lead to the creation of new value or knowledge, they tend to endure over time and eventually result in the formation of a set of "shared personal identities." Another category encompasses ties developed between professional communities in both organizations. If these ties generate novel approaches or innovations and demonstrate continuity over time, they ultimately give rise to what may be termed a "professional identity." Finally, if the multiplicity and intensity of both personal and professional identities between organizations "A" and "B" become pervasive, this process will culminate in the emergence of a "collective identity."

7. Any form of success resulting from the establishment of linkages between organizations "A" and "B" will exert a profound influence on sustaining and enhancing the quality and scope of their mutual interactions. Consequently, the leaders of both organizations will celebrate the initial achievements gained through collaboration and joint efforts, striving to make these accomplishments visible across both organizations. In doing so, they will leverage such successes as a source of motivation to further stimulate engagement and to accelerate the processes of inter-organizational interaction. Recent research by Endres and Weibler (2020) stresses the importance of group rituals for celebrating small and significant successes that bolster commitment, energy and connection to the other members and purpose.

8. The network leadership hub continuously monitors the activities of both organizations "A" and "B" and evaluates the developmental trajectory of their inter-organizational relationship, with the aim of determining their strategic positioning within the overall network and guiding the continuation of support. Should either or both organizations fail to meet the expectations established by the network leadership hub, it is possible that, through a formal decision, one or both may be removed from the network's operational domain. Continued membership in the network is thus contingent upon the consistent enhancement of organizational

performance and the sustained improvement of the quality and depth of inter-organizational interactions across the network.

9. The entry of new organizations into the network composition and the removal of inefficient organizations significantly contribute to maintaining the dynamism of network activities. As noted by Ahuja et al. (2021), the entry of new actors and the exit of underperforming ones represent critical mechanisms through which inter-organizational networks sustain innovation and adaptability. Based on this evidence, such structural fluidity ensures the continual renewal of knowledge flows, competencies, and collaborative potential across the network.

10. The network leadership hub, as well as the leaders of each organization within the network, will continuously strive to manage and control the tensions arising from balancing the dual imperatives of stability and change within their respective domains of governance.

11. The presence of certain conflicts and confrontation appears inevitable in the course of collaboration, joint efforts, and dynamic interactions between organizations “A” and “B.” Consequently, it can be expected that both organizations, in the process of adapting to the demands arising from bilateral interactions, may become engaged in various debates, disputes, and temporary conflicts. In some cases, even resistance and persistence in certain positions may be necessary to achieve mutual understanding and reach a satisfactory compromise.

12. It should be noted that establishing linkages and alliances between two organizations that differ substantially in multiple dimensions—including resource types and capabilities, power structures, operational systems, and even organizational culture—is far from straightforward. This collaborative process represents a complex and uneven path, fraught with challenges and fluctuations. Consequently, no standardized managerial model can be prescribed for guiding inter-organizational collaboration and joint efforts, nor can any predetermined plan serve as the definitive basis for action.

13. The network leadership hub, fully cognizant of the benefits and outcomes of collaboration and inter-connections between the two organizations, and leveraging its knowledge-based oversight, will consistently strive to cultivate motivation and energy among the leaders of both organizations. Through extensive direct and indirect consultations, and by highlighting the advantages of achieving the desired aspirational state and vision, the hub seeks to support them in effectively confronting any challenges or adverse events that may arise during the process of intensified collaboration and interaction between the two organizations.

14. If both organizations, guided and supported by the network leadership hub, are able to overcome potential obstacles and challenges and establish various meaningful linkages between themselves, thereby enabling the bilateral flow of knowledge, it can be expected that indicators of success will emerge sequentially.

These successes are attributable to primary factors that have been cultivated through the guidance and oversight of the network leadership hub and whose legitimacy has been validated in the eyes of the leaders of both organizations. At the core of these factors are components such as mutual trust, commitment to collaboration, resource sharing, and the establishment of knowledge flows between the two organizations. The emergence of these factors can be examined within the framework of formal collaboration agreements between the two organizations.

15. Should the outcomes of these collaborations and the emerging cohesion lead the leaders of both organizations to engage in interactions that extend beyond the expectations and directives of the network leadership hub—even surpassing the stipulations of formal inter-organizational agreements—it can be anticipated that emergent factors will develop between the two organizations. Under their influence, a new form of trust, motivation, and commitment conducive to sustaining collaboration will arise. In such circumstances, norms that significantly exceed the procedures defined by bilateral collaboration agreements will govern the interactions and relationships between the two organizations. The result of this process can be conceptualized as the formation of a collective and shared identity between the organizations. In fact, the presence of both “primary” and “emergent” factors sets the context for and is indicative of the development of collective identity between the two organizations where collaborative processes are highly influenced through deeply-rooted institutionalized norms and values.

With the mechanisms underlying the creation of new identity through dynamic relationships and interactions between the two hypothetical organizations now clarified, this approach can be generalized to the establishment of dynamic interactions among multiple organizations and, ultimately, across the entire network. Consequently, a form of collective identity may emerge among certain nodes or even at the level of the entire network. The emergence of such an identity at the network level is essential for achieving significant outcomes and realizing the aspirational goals of the network. In other words, the attainment of “supra-systems” and “advanced technologies”, which constitute prominent manifestations of contemporary human civilization, is fundamentally rooted in the leadership and formation of collective identity across inter-organizational networks.

**Table 1. Processes of Collective Identity Formation in Inter-organizational Network Leadership**

Stage	Process Description	Key Factors/ Critical Notes
1	Identification and recruitment of organizations by the network hub	Resources, motivation, and persuasion to align with the network trajectory
2	Internal transformation within organizations A and B to align with the network	Structural, procedural, systemic, and cultural changes; reconfiguration of organizational identity
3	Establishing inter-organizational linkages	Formal and informal relationships; sharing of resources (knowledge, financial, physical)
4	Primary factors enabling collaboration	Leadership commitment, mutual trust, sufficient time and resources, conflict-resolution mechanisms
5	Knowledge flows across organizations	Development of knowledge-sharing infrastructures as the backbone of collective identity
6	Levels of linkages	Shared personal identity → shared professional identity → collective identity
7	Early collaborative successes	Visibility of achievements, motivational reinforcement, enhanced network interactions
8	Monitoring and evaluation by the network hub	Performance assessment; potential exclusion of underperforming organizations
9	Network dynamism	Entry of new actors and exit of ineffective ones to sustain innovation
10	Managing tensions	Balancing stability and change by network and organizational leaders
11	Conflicts and resistance	Emergence of disputes, need for compromise, and occasional persistence in bilateral interactions
12	Complexity of collaboration	Divergences in resources, power, systems, and culture; absence of standardized management models
13	Supportive role of the network hub	Direct and indirect consultations; stimulating motivation and energy among leaders
14	Emergence of success indicators	Trust, commitment, resource sharing, and knowledge flows embedded in formal agreements
15	Moving beyond formal agreements	Formation of norms and values exceeding contractual arrangements → emergence of a sustainable collective identity

## Key Factors Enhancing Collective Identity

Collective identity within inter-organizational networks is a fluid and intangible phenomenon, constantly subject to fluctuations and oscillations under the influence of various factors. Therefore, the network leadership hub must dedicate its full attention and effort to sustaining and continuously enhancing this identity. In the previous section, the formation of collective identity between two hypothetical organizations operating within an inter-organizational network was examined, highlighting the prominent roles of “primary” and “emergent” factors. From a broader perspective, the following discussion delineates additional key success factors in shaping and elevating collective identity across the entire network.

1. The attractiveness and aspirational essence of a network’s vision and high-level objectives strongly influence the degree of cohesion and unity among the diverse actors engaged within the network. Accordingly, the network leadership hub must continuously strive to keep the network’s aspirational vision alive in the minds of its members and ensure that it governs all key decisions and primary activities across the network. In other words, the network leadership hub must ensure that the actors within the network clearly understand and are committed to realizing the network’s vision and goals. As highlighted by Shams and Solima (2020), a clear and meaningful vision not only strengthens synergistic interactions among network members but also directly contributes to the development of a shared network identity. Drawing on this understanding, maintaining the vitality and relevance of the network’s vision becomes a strategic necessity for sustaining long-term collaboration and collective coherence.

2. The continuous development of all actors within the network, along with the sustained enhancement of relationships among them, is essential for achieving the network’s aspirational goals and reinforcing its collective identity. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a robust and dynamic evaluation system to oversee network activities, continuously monitoring and assessing the performance of each core unit as well as the interactions among them. In this regard, attention to the following factors is critical:

- Establishing clear and precise criteria for evaluating the performance and expected outcomes of each core unit within the network;
- Implementing an active and timely feedback system to facilitate performance improvements and corrective actions;
- Leveraging all necessary mechanisms to empower network actors to their fullest potential;
- Designing an effective and motivating reward system aligned with the performance of each member;
- Ensuring recognition and attribution of achievements to their rightful owners while preventing appropriation of accomplishments by others;

- Establishing a fair system for recording intellectual property rights for all inventions and innovations generated within the network;
- Offering abundant praise and acknowledgment to network heroes and performance pioneers;
- Providing mechanisms for capturing and documenting experiences, both successful and unsuccessful, and for standardizing newly developed outcomes;
- Fostering a culture of positive competition while mitigating negative or destructive competition to accelerate overall network activities.

3. The sustainability of a network and the continuity of its activities, particularly in the face of unforeseen circumstances or sudden crises, fundamentally depend on the establishment and consolidation of a strong and thriving culture across the network. The governance of such a culture over the network's ethos acts as a powerful invisible force, continuously propelling the entire network toward the realization of its goals and vision while overcoming potential obstacles. At the same time, the prevalence of this culture instills a sustained spirit of collaboration and mutual trust throughout the network, thereby facilitating the free flow of knowledge exchanges that are essential for achieving the network's higher objectives. In this regard, practices such as holding face-to-face meetings with key network stakeholders, extensively employing persuasion and influence mechanisms on principal actors, establishing transparent communication channels, emphasizing ethical standards, attributing successes to rightful owners, and, above all, upholding values rooted in justice and fairness collectively contribute to the foundational strengthening and progressive enhancement of the network's prevailing culture. As emphasized by Provan and Kenis (2019), strong organizational culture and shared values represent the most critical factors for the continuity of networks and the development of a collective identity within inter-organizational settings. Building upon this perspective, nurturing a cohesive and ethically grounded culture becomes indispensable for the network's long-term resilience and legitimacy.

4. Inter-organizational networks can be conceptualized as social institutions whose primary function is the generation and application of new knowledge in pursuit of the network's goals and vision. Consequently, the speed and quality of new knowledge production and application within the network are vital, and network leadership must continuously strive to identify individuals and hubs that are at the forefront of knowledge creation and utilization. These actors should be showcased as role models across the network, and their contributions should be appropriately recognized and celebrated. Two key points are particularly noteworthy in this context. First, the identification and recognition of knowledge and technology champions inherently inject substantial psychological energy into the network, motivating other participants to exert greater effort and engagement. Second, the achievement of any success, in and of itself, not only provides

reassurance for the continuity of network activities but also generates the motivation necessary to intensify and expand such efforts among other members.

5. Alongside conventional managerial mechanisms, the indispensable role of stimulating stakeholders' emotions and sentiments within the network should be recognized. The creation of network-specific symbols, storytelling and narrating instructive events that have occurred across the network, organizing ceremonies to celebrate and showcase progress and achievements, delivering inspiring speeches, promoting motivational slogans, leveraging media channels, screening documentaries and other stimulating materials, and similar initiatives can all effectively engage the emotions and sentiments of network participants. As noted by Bodin and Crona (2020), emotional and symbolic motivation within inter-organizational networks can significantly enhance cohesion and foster the development of a collective identity among network members. Building upon this insight, network leaders can purposefully design emotionally resonant practices and symbolic rituals to sustain member engagement and reinforce shared meaning across the network.

6. In addition to the aforementioned factors, the seamless functioning of activities within the network requires a coherent and robust governance system. Such a system enables the establishment of updated mechanisms, structures, and processes to monitor and control the relatively autonomous members of the network and the interactions among them. Notably, fostering cohesion and integration across the network relies less on coercive or mandatory mechanisms and more on persuasion, consensus-building, and other motivational approaches. Overall, to enhance the quality and effectiveness of governance within the network, the following considerations should be taken into account:

- Establishing a transparent and mutually agreed-upon mechanism for making strategic decisions;
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder;
- Defining precise criteria for evaluating the performance of each stakeholder;
- Ensuring that all members receive the benefits accrued from network activities;
- Setting criteria for onboarding new actors or terminating the participation of underperforming members;
- Providing mechanisms for addressing disputes, tensions, or any factors that may threaten constructive interaction among network actors;
- Developing rules and processes for financing network activities, facilitating effective communication among stakeholders, sharing resources, stimulating knowledge interactions, and managing joint projects;
- Implementing safeguards to protect achieved outcomes and prevent access by external parties or irresponsible actors within the network to valuable knowledge

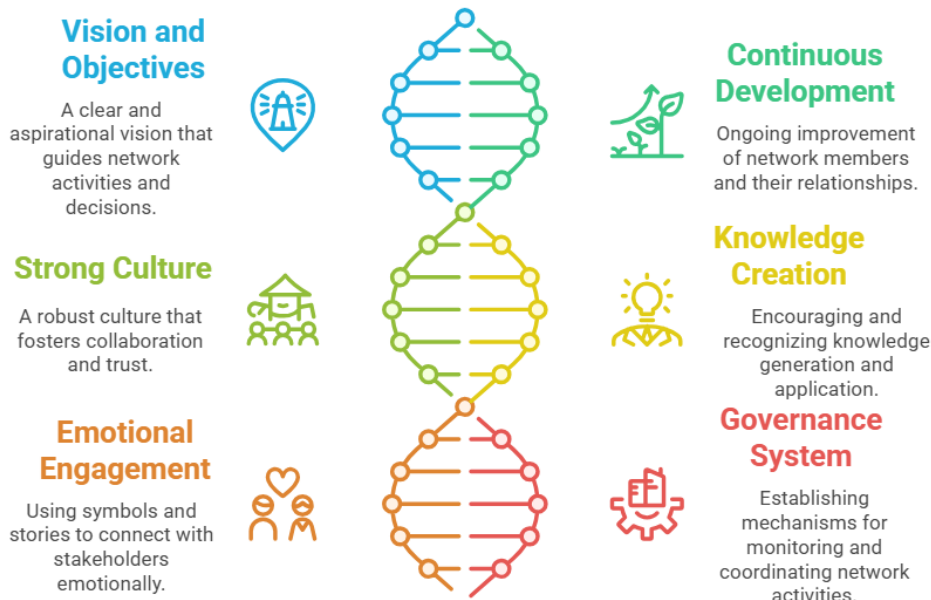
and technological assets;

- Balancing formal mechanisms, such as contracts and sometimes stringent regulations, with informal mechanisms, including trust, norms, and unwritten rules. Overemphasis on formal mechanisms may undermine stakeholder collaboration, whereas excessive reliance on informal mechanisms can increase disorder within the network;

- Ensuring rotation of network leadership among key stakeholders, so that emerging talents within the network have the opportunity to assume appropriate roles and responsibilities;

- Prioritizing the utilization of advanced communication technologies to facilitate interactions among members;

- Continuously updating and streamlining the network's structures, processes, and operational systems to maintain agility and effectiveness.



**Figure 1. Key Factors Enhancing Collective Identity**

This figure illustrates the genetic components of dynamism and effectiveness in inter-organizational networks, depicted through a DNA-like structure. It highlights that the success of a network depends on the synergistic interaction among six key elements: a clear vision and objectives that guide decisions, a strong culture that fosters trust and collaboration, emotional engagement that strengthens

stakeholders' connections, continuous development that ensures the ongoing growth of members and relationships, knowledge creation that promotes innovation and learning, and finally, a governance system that enables coordination and effective oversight. Together, these six components form the internal structure and vitality of the network, granting it adaptability and sustainability.

## **Conclusion**

This presentation has sought to demonstrate, given the decisive and increasingly prominent role of collective identity formation in the leadership of inter-organizational networks, how fostering primary factors—through bilateral or multilateral agreements—can facilitate a culture of collaboration and joint action across organizations within a dynamic network. It also illustrated how, with the emergence of success indicators as outcomes of such collaborations, the establishment of cooperative values and norms beyond contractual frameworks can lead to the formation of emergent factors—such as heightened commitment, deepened trust, sustained motivation for continued collaboration, intensified knowledge interactions, and the formation of robust cooperative ties—which, in turn, may contribute to the formation of collective identity among certain network nodes or even across the entire network.

Furthermore, on a broader level, the presentation discussed the critical success factors that shape and elevate collective identity in inter-organizational networks. Throughout this exposition, the necessity of transforming organizational leaders' perspectives regarding evolving concepts such as “leadership,” “governance,” “power,” “identity,” and “knowledge” became evident—particularly within the turbulent and high-pressure environments of contemporary knowledge-based organizations—highlighting the predominance of “agility and adaptability” over “stability and continuity.”

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