



The Governance and Coordination of Networks: An Analysis of the Findings from an IDRC Strategic Evaluation (1995-2005)

MARÍA FERNANDA TUOZZO AND DIANA TUSSIE

November, 2006



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Evaluation Unit (EU) of IDRC has requested external evaluations to deepen and improve the learning and understanding of IDRC staff so as to enhance the programs with Southern research networks. This study is therefore part of a more comprehensive evaluation exercise also addressing questions of sustainability and outcomes. Through these studies the Centre expects to 'digest' and 'systematize' the wealth of information accumulated over the last ten years of work (1995-2005) with networks from which researchers, practitioners, decision-makers and advocates can learn.

This review has faced some methodological shortcomings as both strategic and project evaluations show that there is partial information concerning specific and detailed analyses of governance dimensions. Some of the conclusions of this review thus need to be treated as preliminary findings. However, the study has found promising leads in the documentation that can help to move along the research on aspects of governance and coordination that may have a significant bearing on the development and achievement of network goals, and ultimately on the Center's objectives.

This study is divided into four analytical parts; the first one examines some the fundamental definitional issues of governance and coordination arrangements in IDRC- supported networks. The second part analyzes outcomes both in terms of networking and development while part three presents some of the most important lessons that can be drawn from the cases and documentation analyzed. The last part provides a limited set of recommendations directed at enhancing our understanding of governance and coordination in networks in order to improve procedures, actions and results.

The definitional analysis takes Schenk's definitions of governance and coordination as a starting point and suggests introducing some amendments to this overview. The review first identifies network goals as an additional factor influencing governance arrangements and second, it proposes a more precise conceptualization of governance and coordination arrangements through a defined set of dimensions that would enable us to study these structures in different networks. These dimensions include: leadership; membership; decision-making and organizational arrangements.

As to results, the evaluation finds that there is no univocal way of interpreting how governance may affect outcomes, be they in the realm of networking or development. The results found should then rather be considered as conditions or key factors affecting results. The factors identified are:

- facilitating and developing the identity of the network
- fostering connectivity and transparency within networks
- encouraging trust and ownership to foster cooperation.

With regards to development goals, Schenk introduces the concept of *internalization* as a fundamental outcome. The reviewers concur only to an extent with this view and note that it needs to be regarded as a result of several conditions and it is extremely difficult either to confirm or deny this as a fundamental outcome. That successful and self-sustaining networks have achieved some degree of internalization constitutes a fact, nevertheless, the extent of internalization and how governance mechanisms may enhance or obstruct this remains to be studied. Nonetheless, the reviewers bring forward some governance related factors that may be of importance in the achievement of development outcomes and of creating processes of internalization. These factors include: presentation and communication issues; the role of network/ institutional relations communicators; and the consistency of network outputs. An additional factor identified as facilitating development outcomes is the structure of the membership.

Regarding key learnings, the evaluation has found six findings worthy of attention and analysis:

- ownership and participation appear to be gradual and incremental processes;
- governance and coordination must be considered as context-specific structures;
- devolution and local development greatly enhance the chances of success and sustainability of networks;
- the presence of a committed and stable donor role also improves network's actions and sustainability;
- leadership seems to be largely a fundamental motor in the development of networks, and lastly;
- there are some fundamental coordination challenges that most networks face in order to develop and expand.

After analyzing each of these findings in detail the evaluation then provides some final recommendations mainly directed at:

- improving the knowledge on governance structures and the influence on network goals;
- considering strategies that may help to achieve such outcomes.

Among the strategies suggested are enhancing the managing capacities of Southern partner organizations and adopting frameworks to guide network planning, monitoring and evaluation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1) Purpose of Evaluation and Method	3
(i) Purpose of the study	3
(ii) Methodology of the Study	3
2) Definitional Issues in IDRC Governance and Coordination Experience with Networks	4
(i) Factors Influencing Governance Structures	4
(ii) Proposed Breakdown of Governance Dimensions	5
(iii) Flexible Governance Arrangements as Instruments of Adaptability	10
3) Results	11
(i) Networking Results.....	11
(ii) Development Results	14
(ii) Structure of Membership	15
4) Key Learnings: Some Preliminary Findings	15
5) Recommendations	22

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALF	Annual Learning Forum
AFSSRN	Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network
ATP	African Technology Policy Secretariat
EU	Evaluation Unit
IDRC	International Development Research Center
IMFNS	International Model Forest Network Secretariat
GREEN	Greater Edendale Environmental Network
G-24 TSS	Group of 24 Technical Support Service
GURI	Global Urban Research Initiative
LATN	Latin American Trade Network
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Cono Sur (Common Market of the Southern Cone)
ORN	Oil Crops Research Network
EEPSEA	The Economy and Environment Program for South East Asia
UNCTAD	United Nations Committee for Trade and Development

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION OF IDRC-SUPPORTED NETWORKS

1) Purpose of Evaluation and Method

(i) Purpose of the study

The International Development Research Center (IDRC) holds a mandate directed at providing funds and expert advice to developing-country researchers working to solve critical development problems. One of the most successful ways the Centre has found to encourage research capacity has been to support research networks among different developing countries and regions as a means of connecting research to policy process and of supporting North-South and South-South collaboration.

The Evaluation Unit (EU) of IDRC has requested external evaluations to deepen and improve the learning and understanding of IDRC staff so as to enhance the programs with Southern research networks. Through these studies the Centre also expects to 'digest' and 'systematize' the wealth of information accumulated over the last ten years of work (1995-2005) with networks from which researchers, practitioners, decision-makers and advocates can learn. As part of IDRC's efforts to reflect about its own experience, this evaluation identifies and reviews the main approaches to governance and coordination in IDRC practice and highlights the major learning acquired in the years of development activities. With this purpose in mind, this review assesses governance and coordination strategies conducive to attaining network goals and suggests some avenues of research that might further enlighten the role these arrangements play in IDRC-supported networks.

It is important to highlight that this study is part of a more comprehensive evaluation also addressing issues of sustainability and outcomes and therefore must be considered as part of a broader and more exhaustive picture.

IDRC has defined 'networks' in a rather loose way that is able to capture the different forms of interaction that the Centre has promoted and sponsored. Networks can be considered as social arrangements formed by individuals and representatives of institutions and directed at establishing and building relationships; sharing tasks; working on mutual or joint activities; enabling new learning and mobilizing alternative action. The goals that they plan to achieve are wide-ranging and include: opening up opportunities to raise the profile of research results; fostering cross fertilization among members; influencing the policy community; building research and policy capacities, or building research agendas.

Although network members maintain their autonomy when they join a network, they also become part of a complex web of relations and interactions that need direction and purpose. It is the direction and coordination of such interactions that are at the heart of this evaluation. What coordination and cooperation mechanisms, institutional arrangements and practices are best suited to facilitate network interaction? How do governance arrangements contribute and favour the achievement of goals? How do networks adopt/select governance mechanisms? How can their appropriateness be best assessed?

These constitute some of the fundamental questions that guide this evaluation in order to provide lessons and findings that may help to improve our understanding of network dynamics and enhance networks' actions and results.

(ii) Methodology of the Study

This review is largely based upon the analysis and findings of surveys and several strategic and project evaluations (Schenk, 2005; Adamo, 2002; Wind, 200; Smutylo, 2005; Macadar, 2003; Tussie, Riggirozzi and Tuplin, 2003, etc). In addition, some academic literature has been brought in to clarify or provide greater precision to concepts and ideas.

Some methodological caveats need to be mentioned. This study finds that while IDRC's activities to build capacity for research, improve the quality of research and influence policy are very well documented, how these networking efforts are managed and coordinated have not been studied as thoroughly. This review therefore faces similar shortcoming as those identified in the previous governance related evaluation in that the data that explicitly addresses these issues tends to be limited. Except for one evaluation (Schenk 2005), the documentation was not written directly for this review. Both strategic and project evaluations show that there is partial information concerning specific and detailed analyses of governance dimensions making some of the

conclusions of this review preliminary. However, the study has found promising leads in the documentation that can help to move along the research on aspects of governance and coordination that may have a significant bearing on the development and achievement of network goals, and ultimately on IDRC's objectives. The intended audience of this report is IDRC program staff and network coordinators but the reviewers believe that the findings will also be of interest and relevance to other colleagues in the development and academic communities engaged with the analysis of research networks.

2) Definitional Issues in IDRC Governance and Coordination Experience with Networks

This study takes Schenk's definitions of governance and coordination as a starting point and suggests introducing some amendments to this overview. The review first identifies network goals as an additional factor influencing governance arrangements and second, it proposes a more precise conceptualization of governance and coordination arrangements through a defined set of dimensions that would enable us to study these structures in different networks. In particular, the presence of *rules- both formal and informal- to establish interaction, procedures and mechanisms for the exercise of leadership and authority and the specific form these arrangements may take overtime*. This review considers that there is no systematic analysis on governance structures and that such a break down is indispensable to establish more clearly how governance arrangements may contribute to both network results and development outcomes. This section finishes with a brief overview on how greater flexibility in governance structures may enhance the adaptive capacities of a network and its ability to manage change.

(i) Factors Influencing Governance Structures

Schenk defines governance *'as the institutions, processes and traditions that determine how power is exercised, how decisions are made and enforced and how members pursue their interests'* (2005). The evaluation findings show that within this overarching definition there is no unique style of implementing governance in IDRC broad network experience. Different forms of governance, and management apply to different activities developed by the Centre. Governance arrangements are thus multiple and have been described as *'decentralized authority', 'democratic', 'non-hierarchical' and 'bottom-up'* among others (Schenk, 2005a: 2). Schenk has conceived the umbrella concept of *'structured flexibility'* that captures quite faithfully the variety of governance structures present in IDRC networks and to indicate that this flexibility allows networks to change and evolve as new objectives and goals are established (Schenk, 2005: v).

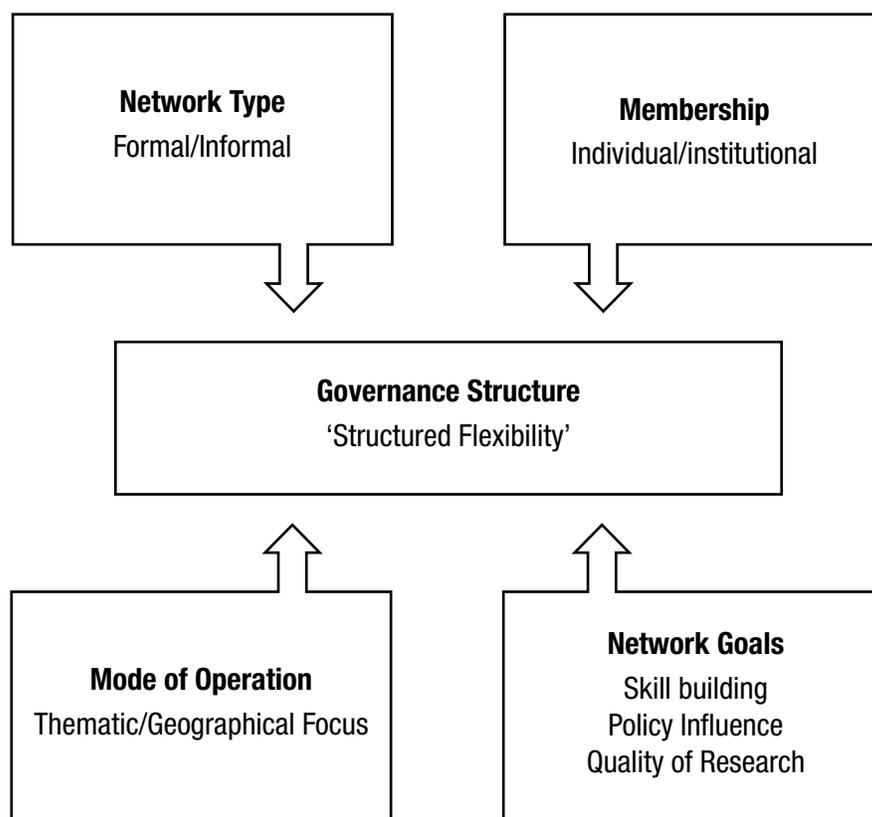
According to Schenk governance is influenced by three common factors (i) *network type*; (2) *mode of operation*; and (3) *membership base*. When referring to network type, Schenk indicates that networks range from formal and highly structured to less-formal and structured networks such as communities of practice, associations, links and connections. Regarding the mode of operation the emphasis here is on how networks are organized according to a thematic or geographical focus. The third factor deals primarily with different types of membership that may include individuals, institutions, individuals representing an institution, government officials, policy makers and civil society, and most probably a combination of these (Schenk, 2005: 9).

Through the analysis of the reports and data, this review found that *network goals* also constitute an additional factor shaping the governance structure of a network. Whether a network is committed to skill building, building research capacity, conducting and sharing research or influencing policy, governance arrangements will most probably differ as priorities and functions vary. For instance, a network that prioritizes influencing policy-making among its goals will probably establish certain governance arrangements to reflect this. Some project evaluations have found that the potential for policy influence is greater when policymakers are included as network members (Currie-Alder, 2005: 2). Thus several governance structures have been designed to reflect a variety of stakeholders. In the case of MERCOSUR and the Economic Research Forum networks, the network included intended beneficiaries in order to ensure that research questions were relevant and timely. This was also the case with other IDRC projects such as the Agricultural Policy Research Network for West and Central Africa that attempted to link research and policy-making more strongly (Adamo, 2004: 27).

In a similar vein, the documentation also shows that the location of a network can be influenced by network goals, particularly in those cases where policy influence is a priority. The type of location, however, can vary if the goal is to prioritize the networks' main objectives. Some evaluators found that an institution that provides

for independent thinking is especially fit as it increases network credibility and the perception of an autonomous venue divorced from the ebbs and flows of particular national, political, sectoral or corporate interests (Macadar, 2003: 47; Stone and Maxwell, 2005: 6). In some cases, as with the Economic Research Forum, the network was located in a hybrid institution which included members from both government and the private sector in order to ensure that policymakers were more involved in the research process, and in turn, that the network was relevant and responsive to their needs (Adamo, 2004: 27). In other cases, changes in governance arrangements such as the expansion and inclusion of additional network nodes, as was the case in the Latin American Trade Network (LATN), can also involve a shift in the location of networks as a response to the new needs and the division of labour among members.

The following diagram summarizes the main factors influencing different forms of governance:



Drawing from the reviewed documentation this study proposes a break down of governance and coordination definitions in order to make these concepts more operational. Even though Schenk's study of governance and coordination provides an accurate overview of factors leading to different governance arrangements and a detailed identification of key mechanisms to coordinate networks, it does not offer a consistent set of dimensions to identify *specific governance structures* present in IDRC's experience. For instance, the definitions are still general enough that they do not identify particular arrangements for i.e., centralized or decentralized forms of decision-making; or how strategic and organizational functions are exercised (if undertaken by one leading institution, if distributed among members, shared with donor etc.).

The aim of this breakdown is to draw attention to several governance arrangements and components that will enable future research to establish more clearly if and how they may affect network goals. So far, several evaluation documents (strategic and project evaluations) have provided some insights into these relations, but findings remain preliminary. An example that appeared repeatedly in IDRC documentation relates to leadership and how it has influenced network sustainability. While there appears to be some consensus about the important role that strong leadership plays in the development of a network, several evaluators and project-related interviewees have suggested that network sustainability seems more feasible when leadership 'shifts

from key individuals and is distributed among network members' (Tyler, as quoted in Currie-Alder, 2005: 7). This implies that what could be understood as more 'decentralized forms of governance' may provide networks better chances of continuity (Annual Learning Forum, 2005: 49; Wind, 2005:3). The reviewers believe that a systematized framework of governance dimensions would facilitate fleshing out what, so far, seem to be case-by-case findings.

(ii) Proposed Breakdown of Governance Dimensions

To make the concept of governance and the approaches to coordination more operational, this review proposes to concentrate on four relevant dimensions of governance arrangements that include coordination approaches: leadership; membership rules and responsibilities; decision-making and organizational structure.¹

It is important to emphasize that this proposed guide does not constitute an attempt at standardization but a template to establish dimensions relevant to networks outcomes. Governance arrangements and their influence on both network and development results will not only vary from context to context, but will also probably shift throughout the life span of a network. As is pointed out in the preliminary findings, governance arrangements seem to generally change as networks develop. In a network context, governance should be considered as work in progress, as a steady constructive effort. The dynamic nature of networks demands adjustments and changes in the way a network is run. As partnerships evolve and members (probably few) increase their involvement and commitment towards the network, new responsibilities and a revision of obligations is in order. The revision of such procedures usually happens as a result of the growth of the network, the emergence of new demands and of the increasing dedication of partners. Changes in responsibilities and participation on strategic aspects of network governance are not only necessary but also desirable to reflect the development of the network and to balance the involvement of members.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership appears as a central element in network governance and coordination. In IDRC's experience, leadership has been usually exercised by a coordinator (Schenk, 2005: 14). The role of the coordinator, however, varies considerably and can entail very different responsibilities and different authority arrangements. There are strategic and organizational responsibilities within a network that can be exercised jointly or separately by a network coordinator, and coordination may be handled single-handedly or may rely on other mechanisms such as steering committees or advisory boards.²

Strategic responsibilities refer to the establishment of network goals; strategies to implement these goals; use of resources; information flows within a network and exchanges with the external context. Organizational responsibilities, on the other hand, relate primarily to those managerial and administrative activities that allow a network to operationalize and implement its goals. Leadership can involve taking an active lead on both fronts or only in one of them, usually the strategic. The examples found in IDRC documentation show different examples of leadership; while some cases are characterized by split network responsibilities, in others these responsibilities can be exercised by a coordinator and a single institution. The G-24 is an example of split responsibilities where the Research Director and Liaison officer have handled strategic tasks and decisions while the United Nations Committee for Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been in charge of the management of the project (Tussie, Riggiozzi and Tuplin, 2003: 12). In other cases, such as the Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network (AFSSRN) and LATN particular coordinators or institutions have played a more comprehensive role handling both responsibilities, at least until the network had expanded enough to transfer or share those responsibilities. Strategic responsibilities can also be shared with a steering or advisory committee if they have been established. These mechanisms are particularly useful as they may facilitate the interaction and relations with the external environment. The presence of reputed participants as advisory members heightens the profile and exposure and may open up opportunities for interaction with their extended professional networks.

Sharing leadership responsibilities among several different network members has been raised in several documents of this review but in the documentation available to this review we have found few examples of such

1 Terry Smutylo also recognized the need to specify the mechanisms present for establishing strategies and activities, and identifying the type of leadership and decision-making mechanisms present in a network (2005: 12-13).

2 This classification concurs to an extent with Schenck's strategic and operational levels identified in coordination approaches.

arrangements. Also, although we have not found examples where IDRC might have played either a strategic and/or organizational coordination role, its involvement in coordination has been noted in several evaluations. Network coordinators have remarked very positively on IDRC involvement –very and somewhat satisfied in issues of administration and management (94%) and network content (89%) - (Decima, 2006: 78). While IDRC program staff have noted at the 2005 Annual Learning Forum (ALF), that the Centre *supports* and does not *manage* networks (ALF, 2005: 45). This concern and emphasis may be linked to other points raised, in particular, the perception that Program Officers (POs) may not have the skills to become coordinators /facilitators of networks (ALF, 2005: 45).

Overall, this review finds that there is enough information to suggest a variety of leadership arrangements present in IDRC practice, but precise information and detail about them is more limited.

MEMBERSHIP

The establishment of membership rules is relevant as it can either strengthen a network by contributing to its adaptability and sustainability or in worst case scenarios, it may contribute to the disruption of the networks' goals and endanger its sustainability. The Decima Survey shows that membership in more than half of IDRC networks are closed (63%) which implies that some form of governance arrangements regarding membership are present (formal or informal). How are then membership rules established in the networks and who are the main decision-makers? Concerns regarding inequality in membership and power differentials were raised at the Annual Learning Forum especially in cases where there is dependence on a single donor that may also be a stakeholder (2005:46).

Wind finds that the rules of membership and criteria (how members are chosen) to integrate a network is an important dimension that influences the sustainability of the network in as much as it affects substantially the internal relations (2005: 3). In her ethnographical study Bernard makes a similar point by indicating that in IDRC experience networks show different levels of membership that range from a core agenda of setters to peripheral users-members (1996). Both these analyses indicate differences in membership and participation that might also be reflected in different levels of engagement in governance and coordination responsibilities. The roles of members and divisions of responsibilities among them thus constitute a crucial aspect of governance as it determines to a large extent the degree of involvement present in a network.

The governance structure will reflect the distribution of authority among the membership, and will influence the definition of roles, rules and responsibilities. A clear division of responsibility and delineation of roles has been considered to produce successful experiences. Schenk quotes the case of the African Economic Research Consortium where the roles of the Board, Advisory Committee and a Secretariat were clearly established and helped to increase the sense of ownership within the network. The absence of such clear lines of roles, she argues, may have the opposite effect and can lead to inhibiting a network reaching its objectives (Schenk, 2005: 17). This view, however, needs to be considered in light of the particular context in which the example is drawn, the African Consortium responds to a large extent to the specific characteristics and conditions present in Africa almost 20 years ago and to ideas of networking for development at the time. Nonetheless, the distribution of responsibilities and roles appears as extremely relevant dimension as it affects the ways and extent to which members 'belong' and are part of a network.

DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making is a central aspect of governance arrangements as it determines the power and authority relations present within a network. Within the scope of decision-making there are issues of particular importance as they affect core aspects of network dynamics. At least three aspects are especially relevant: vision and goals, strategic planning, and budgetary issues. The way members participate in the definition of these processes is quite crucial as it establishes members' involvement in the definition of priorities, roles and responsibilities within the network.

IDRC evaluators (Schenk, 2005; Bernard, 1996) as well as academic studies on the subject (Creech and Willard, 2001) coincide on the relevance of forming a commonality of values and vision at the outset of a network. The establishment of network goals underpinned by shared values and interests bestows the network with a sense of direction and identity necessary for its development. Strategic plans, budgetary and resource issues are also of the utmost importance as they constitute key factors not only in the realization of network

goals (and the means to achieve them) but also in relation to its growth and sustainability.³ The way members participate in creating this sense of commonality, as well as the strategies that will give direction and foundation to them, are defining instances able to generate or enhance *ownership*, necessary to the successful work of networks.

Decisions related to these three aspects can emerge either in a centralized or decentralized way. In research organizations most of these decisions seem to be the product of participatory processes. The Decima 2006 survey supports to some extent the inclusiveness of network arrangements as almost three quarters of members (73%) reported having an influence in goal definition (18% great influence, 55% moderate influence). However, the information about decision-making mechanisms in networks is quite limited. There is little information of how decision-making rules are established, if they are explicitly defined or if they grow organically with the development of the network (Smutylo, 2005: 13).

• ***ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE***

The organization structure refers primarily to the managerial and administrative roles and tasks that operationalize networks goals and strategies into the day-to-day activities. These functions are usually exercised by network staff that may depend on the leader or on a particular institution chosen for that purpose. These activities can encompass tasks of logistics such as: travel arrangements; organization of conferences; review of outputs such as papers and briefs; enforcement of deadlines; communication and information activities.

In the experience of IDRC-supported networks these arrangements seem to be usually shared in some way, either among network members, stakeholders or with the donor. Just over half of the networks reviewed are managed by some sort of shared coordination agreement (IDRC, 2005: 5). However, how these tasks are shared; how these activities are decided upon and exercised have not been explored in the documentation available to this evaluation.

3 Strategic planning includes among its relevant activities the definition of priorities, division of responsibilities among members, selection of an appropriate institutional home where a network may be better positioned to secure funding, rely on reputed contacts, and have access to facilities and services.

The following then is a preliminary matrix to be used as a guide for the discussion of a clearer governance framework:

Governance Dimensions	Key Issues For Further Exploration
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is the leadership exercised? (Main network leader, donor, few advisors, Steering committees) - Is this position elected or appointed? - Are there particular forms of leadership more predominant in IDRC- supported networks? - Are particular forms of leadership better suited to network work and expectations? - How are goals and strategies decided? By whom? What mechanisms are in place to deliberate and decide? - What is the role of the donor?
Membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are membership rules established and who are the main decision-makers? - Are these rules revised or expanded to include new members in the decision-making process? - Are these rules formalized or implicit? - How are the members' responsibilities decided?
Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are then decision-making rules established, explicitly defined or do they grow organically? - Which decision-making mechanisms are in place? (Voting practices/ Consensus building)? - What conditions facilitate consensus building or more participatory forms of decision-making within a network? - Is there equality or diverse tiers of decision-making within the network? - What is the role of the donor?
Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are organizational tasks overviewed and managed by the network leader/coordinator? - Are the organizational tasks shared? With whom? - What capacities are necessary to exercise these functions locally? - What is the role of the donor?

There is a generalized view that networks provide an alternative to hierarchical forms of organization because of their greater flexibility and adaptability (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). However, networks are not necessarily horizontal structures where power is equally distributed among all its members. Networks vary considerably and only some of them will present more or less horizontal structures. Nevertheless, networks are able to promote cooperation in ways where coordination of action is no longer the result of what could be termed 'central steering' but rather by what Kenis and Scheneider refer to as 'purposeful interactions of individual actors capable of exchanging information and other resources' (1991: 26). To further understand how governance structures may strengthen collaboration, additional information on governance arrangements is neces-

sary to identify mechanisms and practices that may facilitate the process of cooperation. According to several evaluators the sense of ownership in a network is crucial not only for enhancing collaboration but also for its sustainability (Smutylo, 2005; Schenk, 2005; Wind, 2005; Bernard, 1996). But what creates a sense of ownership? What particular activities or decisions can be considered to elicit greater sense of belonging and loyalty? Different network experiences could help to identify dimensions of particular relevance for building ownership.

Ownership can be only fully reached when network functions, agenda and decisions are actively taken by its members so that members 'drive the network as a whole, rather than just contribute to some of its activities' (Wind, 2005: 3). Full ownership in a network must include governance-related responsibilities that contemplate a role in the definition of an agenda and in the functioning and direction of the network (Smutylo; 2004: 21). The way governance is exercised can thus contribute to enhance or limit the sense ownership in a network through the use and presence of more inclusive or 'negotiated' mechanisms and practices. The sharing of governance responsibilities, however, needs to be considered as a way of involving members more thoroughly in the networks, but it constitutes only one of the means to do so. The multiple demands faced by researchers may lead individuals and organizations to seek participation but in a more limited fashion given that their human resources and capacities might already be stretched to the limit. The attraction to the network need not be linked to administration and decision-making capacities, but rather to the prestige, recognition and reach of the network.

The Annual Learning Forum in 2005 submitted a series of recommendations in relation to how networks are coordinated in order to ensure that they are not 'too top-down' (ALF, 2005: 51) as 'it matters if a network is horizontal or hierarchical in structure' (ALF, 2005: 13). One of the main reasons underpinning this concern possibly lies in the fact that in a 'top-down' network the chances of success and sustainability are probably lower as interaction among members and a sense of inclusiveness and trust has not expanded enough to generate ownership in the network. The ability of networks to manage themselves is a constitutive dimension of a sustainable network. It is essential to have in place mechanisms to reach consensus, make decisions, manage resources, adapt or respond to internal and external needs and pressures. Other factors that may fall within this dimension include fostering member engagement and ownership, the existence of an organizational base, facilitation and leadership, and technical leadership and mentoring (ALF, 2005: 19-20).

The presence of transparent practices and clear lines of accountability are also important conditions that can contribute to the development of a network and the expansion of ownership and sustainability. Transparency of information flows in a network, as in any other form of organization, sets conditions that facilitate involvement and fluency in interaction. In research organizations transparent practices in the sharing of research findings and information will contribute to the development of an enabling and trusting environment that fosters network expansion and growth. Transparent practices can also help to reduce some of the initial reluctance in the sharing research findings members may initially show.

Explicit accountability practices also create trust among network participants and enhance the chances of developing stable durable relationships among partners. Accountability can be considered as a chain of relationships in which actors are accountable in three fundamental directions. Upwards towards donors and other actors that may have some kind of formal authority over the organization; downward toward target groups and beneficiaries but also to other groups and individuals that the network/partnership may affect directly or indirectly, and inwards, to organizational stated missions, vision and values (Blagescu and Young, 2005: 4). In the context of networking, accountability to and among members is particularly important as it influences the development of trust and reliance among the partners. Two dimensions are particularly relevant when attempting to meet shared expectations, a clear understanding of partners' responsibilities, and the procedures in place to ensure the enforcement of commitments undertaken by members. In this latter instance governance and coordination arrangements become especially relevant as the enforcement of commitments will most probably fall within their competence.

Clear lines of accountability can also reduce possible tensions between members and leaders in a network that can be detrimental to project development and efficacy. As it has been the case with projects like the G-24 Technical Support Service (TSS), tension and competition between the Liason Officer, in charge of policy community relations, the research director leader of the research/policy dynamic and UNCTAD in charge of

management, produced several difficulties that could be explained as problems of blurred accountability that made responsibility lines across the network unclear and ultimately impinged the efficacy of the project (Tusie, Riggirozzi and Tuplin, 2003: 11, 12).

(iii) Flexible Governance Arrangements as Instruments of Adaptability

Networks are dynamic partnerships that either evolve in time or that simply cease to exist as their goals have been accomplished. At the Annual Learning Forum participants noted the relevance of recognizing this dynamic nature as networks with different objectives must adapt as the network's aims and objectives evolve (ALF, 2005: 33). When networks face a process of transformation, several adjustments may take place including: the redefinition of priorities, of goals, the formation of new strategies and the revision of membership and partner's responsibilities in the network. Underlying governance structures will also experience some change in time although they may not be as visible. Networks with flexible, informal structures may accommodate more easily to changes in membership, goals or mere procedure as the absence of formalized and institutionalized instances of coordination may prove more malleable to modifications and less rigid for introducing innovation.

For instance, in the experience of LATN, network transformations have increased over time and have involved changes in network objectives dealing primarily with the expansion of focus of research and changes in the composition of membership. These modifications together with the strengthening of network partners led to subsequent changes in the governance structure. These changes entailed the creation of a Steering Committee that began to participate in the transcendental decisions of the network, a mechanism that was put in motion together with sub-regional coordination units to decentralize the operations and enhance ownership. In this particular case, the absence of cumbersome formal procedures and of a written chart or constitution avoided time-consuming and financially demanding procedures that would have undermined rather than strengthened the capacities of the network.

The definition of network goals within a broad thematic umbrella can also be considered to help processes of transformation and re-definition of agendas as the expansion or re-adjustment of priorities are easier to present and process. Moreover, a broad working theme allows 'space' for members to pursue their own projects (Wind, 2005a: 4), as separate but still linked business units and thus to maintain and bring together different lines of work.

Processes of evaluation can be particularly relevant as they may help to develop greater adaptive capacities when they act as triggers of transformation. The process of assessing goals, actions and outcomes of networks may lead networks' leaders and stakeholders to embark upon a course of change to expand goals and strategies and to recalibrate the reach of the network. In this sense, frequent exercises of evaluation may prove to be an effective way of promoting adaptive capacities in a more gradual and perhaps, less distressful fashion.

Adaptable governance mechanisms seem to be more successful when they are able to provide room for experimentation and they can minimize administrative procedures and costs of transformations. A detailed study of the forms these mechanisms and practices have taken in IDRC experience would clarify and provide prospective networks with insightful ideas about change, adaptation and even re-foundation.

Time frames for transformation constitute a puzzling absence in the debates about adaptability, and times frames seem to matter. Initial re-adjustments and even radical change in initial phases seem more feasible than small changes when networks have become embedded and established within the niche where they operate. It is at this instance that questions of adaptability vs. re-foundations merit some thought and reflection. At which stage and phase of network development can changes be more successfully pursued? What extent and depth of change is required? Is it worthwhile? Can a successful and renowned network lose its appeal if changes are too encompassing? Is it always better to adapt and or should successful networks just recognize the capital achieved? Further analysis on this subject should help clarify the merits but also the limits of adaptability. To belabor the point, excessive adaptability may kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

3) Results

Based on Schenk's evaluation this review assesses two different types of results, network results and development results. The first relates principally to social relationships, cooperation and the capacities developed to grow and mobilize resources in a network, while the second refers primarily to outcomes produced while interacting and attempting to influence the external environment (2005: 23-24). This primary distinction allows us to separate in a more methodical way dimensions that in every day practice are very much intertwined and mutually dependent. The distinction also allows us to review and discriminate more systematically different levels of goals and types of interactions within a network.

When considering the relationship between coordination approaches and the results they have yielded, this review finds that there is no univocal way of interpreting how governance may affect outcomes (networking or development). Results are dependent on a variety of factors that range from the particular governance mechanisms present in a network to the specific context in which networks develop and operate. Understanding the results that coordination approaches produce should therefore be context related and should be considered also in terms of processes. For this reason, this review suggests identifying factors, lessons and general trends of how governance structures may influence outcomes rather than establishing particular co-relations. The following outcomes (including those identified by Schenk) should, perhaps, then be considered as conditions or key factors affecting results. These factors include: facilitating and developing the identity of the network; fostering connectivity and transparency within networks; encouraging trust and ownership to foster cooperation. With regards to development goals, Schenk introduces the concept of *internalization* as a fundamental outcome. The reviewers concur only to an extent with this view and note that it needs to be regarded as a result of several conditions of which only one of them is the governance structure. This list of findings therefore has been in some cases qualified and the study has included structures of membership as an additional factor in the development outcomes section.

(i) Networking Results

· IDENTITY

The ability of networks to reach agreement on a common vision and objectives has been considered as an outcome, particularly in those cases where networks have been able to achieve external recognition of their efforts. This identity development capable of accomplishing credibility and legitimacy for the network has been identified as 'brand recognition' (Schenk, 2005: 25).

Example: Latin American Trade Network

'[...] consider the particular way that LATN has of looking at problems. This consists of combining knowledge and placing it at the disposal of a particular sphere...It has a particular approach which might be called "institutional political economy" with a combination of technical, legal, judicial and economic elements. This might be considered as an approach that is unique to the project, created by LATN...

(Macadar, 2003: 47-48)

However, not all networks are able to find a niche and develop external recognition. Nevertheless, the process of articulating an identity and common goals is necessary to the development of a network, and the process *per se* can be considered as an active conduit towards greater cooperation and more stable interaction. A network with clear and established goals and identity will probably be more successful in securing alternative sources of funding and expanding its membership as it will attract greater interest from possible participants. In a world of multiple allegiances and memberships, identities that are recognized and reputed are better able to create loyalties among partners.

Face to face meetings among members, consensual definition of goals and priorities together with shared obligations are only some of the processes that may contribute to forging a clear-cut identity. Exploring and

identifying the different mechanisms and practices used in some of the 'success cases' may prove conducive to establishing what governance structures might be more effective in contributing to this process.

Suggested Cases to Explore

- International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS)
- On Farmers Fields
- Oil Crops Research Network (ORN)
- The Economy and Environment Program for South East Asia (EEPSEA)
- African Technology Policy Secretariat (ATPS)
- Global Urban Research Initiative (GURI)
- Latin American Trade Network (LATN)

(Schenk, 2005)

CONNECTIVITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Greater connectivity can be considered as a relevant factor influencing network outcomes in two different directions. Connectivity constitutes an essential component of network dynamics that greatly influences the development of a network and is also an important way of establishing practices that may encourage participatory partnerships as well as greater openness and transparency.

Poor communication and interaction can impede any attempts of growth in a network and can neutralize efforts for resource mobilization and/or revision of a network's mandate and goals. In this context, connectivity mainly refers to the linkages established among members and the quality of the information that flows between them (Schenk, 2005: 27).

Connectivity can happen in a more spontaneous and un-structured manner among network members and can also be a product of strategic plans to acquire more efficient levels of communications. In the first case, greater connectivity is the product of active member participation and an outcome of reciprocity and trust developed within a network. Networks that are well established and have shared their knowledge and experience will be better disposed to cooperate. In the second case, connectivity is a strategic goal pursued within a network to enhance exchanges and sharing of information between members. It may be that communications are fostered between national and regional members; between national members; between coordination/ leadership units and members or among all stakeholders. The mechanisms used to improve communication are probably varied in IDRC experience but our review has found that one of the most common strategies has been the establishment of intermediary mechanisms for communication in order to facilitate interaction and dialogue. Intermediary institutions or processes fundamentally function as a bridge between various levels of networking (Schenk, 2005: 28). The examples below constitute two different forms of intermediary mechanisms that help connectivity within networks.

Example 1: Facilitation as in GREEN

As part of the Phase II of the Msunduzi Community Network, the Greater Edendale Environmental Network (GREEN) was set up as a central node of the network to operate as a facilitator between Msunduzi communities and the water authorities. GREEN was also intended to operate at the interface of divergent socio-economic sector. (As quoted in Schenk, 2005: 28)

Example 2: Intermediary Process as in Group of 24 (G-24)

In order to foster closer connections and communications between researchers and G24 representatives a Research Studies Advisory Group was created which was later on, replaced by the Technical Group (TG). The aim of this group was to improve policy implications by enhancing the flow of information to Executive Directors in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The results have been positive although far from the desired objective of effectively and systematically influencing policy. (Tussie, 2003: 9-14)

Greater transparency in information flows provides a facilitating environment for cooperation and dialogue. Information sharing is an act of trust not just interest and it is enhanced by practices and mechanisms that allow for greater transparency and openness in knowledge sharing. To this end, the presence of transparent interactions and practices will undoubtedly increase cooperation and the sharing of knowledge. The sharing of information in ways that increases its access and transfer constitute according to the Decima 2006 survey the two greatest benefits that networks provide, at least for coordinators and their institutions (2006: 106). The development of such practices and strategies of communication of information within and among networks may have an additional fundamental value in that ‘the promotion of a political culture of openness, transparency and inclusion can be considered as a development outcome in its own right’ (Adamo, 2005: 33). The documents reviewed in this evaluation, however, cannot confirm such outcomes but the reviewers would like to support the belief that the promotion of such practices may indeed lead to significant advances in terms of transparency, openness and more participatory practices. Furthermore, the promotion of transparency and information sharing in development may help to advance the notion of knowledge sharing as a public good.

TRUST AND OWNERSHIP

The role of trust and ownership may appear as quite intangible, yet they constitute key components that affect cooperation, resource mobilization and growth in a network. Trust is a core feature underpinning network relationships and in the Center’s experience, trust is generated through interpersonal interaction and/or through specific processes that facilitate a common understanding between network members (Schenk, 2005: 31). Schenk states that in the documents reviewed there were several instances where IDRC-supported networks made reference to the role of processes as contributing to build trust between network participants (2005: 30). At the Annual Learning Forum participants widely agreed that the promotion of trust should be one of the fundamental tasks of coordinators (2005: 28). It is not clear though, what processes have been already instrumented and how successful they have proved to be in achieving this goal. Undoubtedly, greater participation in governance structures and/or strategic decisions that affect the growth and the direction of the network can help to increase the sense of trust and ownership, however, this may not be the best alternative to all network parties. An underlying implication in several evaluations (Wind, 2005; Smutylo, 2005) is that members are ready and willing to undertake governance and coordination obligations but this has not been the experience of all networks. In some cases, members have been already overstretched in their capacities when they joined and even though they may constitute key partners because of the work they produce and the impact they are able to achieve, governance responsibilities may not be a feasible option. How then are trust and ownership fostered? What practices can be drawn from experience? Can they be streamlined into institutional incentives? Have any of them been documented as such? In the case of LATN, to enhance the sense of belonging members showing an inclination to maintaining the allegiance and the promotion of the network were given a “retainer fee” to fulfill their obligations and move from a voluntary basis to a more professionalized way of sustaining the network. This mechanism also helped to increase the sense of entitlement over the work produced.

Also noteworthy of mentioning in this section is the fact that culture may play a particularly important role in the promotion of trust and ownership. Social norms and implicit values and principles may play a predominant role in the generation of trust thus posing a major challenge to network leaders and coordinators particularly in regional and global networks.

(ii) Development Results

Development outcomes include the promotion of development objectives such as production, sharing and dissemination of knowledge; influence on policy; quality of the research and research outputs. In short, how network outputs might contribute to improve and change the external environment, be that policies, legislation, formation of national and regional agendas, affect debates and improve the quality of research among others.

INTERNALIZATION

Schenk finds *internalization* as the most relevant development outcome. Internalization entails the process of identifying and integrating knowledge that is relevant to approach particular problems and to meet the needs of network participants, stakeholders, and the intended beneficiaries (2005: 35). Reviewers find that it is extremely difficult either to confirm or deny internalization as a fundamental outcome. What is clear, though, from the documentation analyzed is that internalization and governance arrangements hold very tenuous links. When analyzing influence, particularly in the realm of ideas and research, evidence of direct causality is exceptional and even Schenk notes that there is not enough information on the subject and that 'there is a pressing relevance of understanding this process to further explore how and why specific governance and coordination mechanisms may facilitate or impede this process' (2005: 37). That successful and self-sustaining networks have achieved some degree of internalization constitutes a fact, nevertheless, their extent and how governance mechanisms may enhance or obstruct this remains to be studied.

Drawing from the experience of LATN, the reviewers would like to bring forward some governance related factors that may be of importance in the achievement of development outcomes. One of the key characteristics of the governance structure is that it constitutes a meeting point between internal dynamics and the external environment. As such the way the external environment is approached, how goals are articulated and pursued and the strategies that are instrumented to achieve them are key processes that affect a network's chances of creating processes of internalization. Governance and coordination arrangements then should pay particular attention to three issues: presentation and communication issues; the role of network/ institutional relations communicators; and the consistency of network outputs.

Presentational issues are especially relevant when approaching the external environment. It is quite widely acknowledged that in issues of policy influence the 'styles of dissemination' are of great relevance and researchers should carefully consider the type of language used so that it may appeal to potential users (Stone, Maxwell and Keating, 2001:18; ALF, 2005: 6). According to Carden and Nielson 'packaging, marketing and communicating solutions to complex problems and issues appears to be a skill that many researchers and development donors have overlooked. Yet researchers are expected to do more than research, they are expected to be able to communicate and disseminate their findings to policy and decision makers (2005: 152). Although the issue is controversial as not all researchers share this view on dissemination, it is nonetheless a question that needs to be addressed by networks whose main goals relate to policy influence. Other issues related to dissemination involve length of information, use of non-technical language and timeliness of the subject researched. Coordinators and steering committees are better positioned to make these judgments and such skills should be taken into account when appointing these positions. Who handles and leads institutional relations is also of great relevance. Depending on the goals attempting to be accomplish networks should select communicators that are well established within the community the network is attempting to influence or approach. Well-known and respected researchers can make significant contributions as they will be able to establish and facilitate contacts with potential users and beneficiaries. If well acquainted with the issues and bearers of in-depth expertise in the subject, institutional liaisons may increase the receptiveness of target audiences. Lastly, quality control should be a priority of coordinators and main network stakeholders. One of the fundamental 'calling cards' and trademarks of a network is the output they produce. Consistent high quality research is thus an essential way of achieving recognition.

(ii) Structure of Membership

This structure is particularly relevant in the expansion of a network and in the outcomes is able to produce. As noted by participants in the Annual Learning Forum, selecting key individuals with specific profiles is crucial

for the development of a successful network (2005: 31). There are several reasons for this, among the most important are identifying a mixture of individuals with good reputation and credentials that will be able to grow hand in hand with the network. For instance, in a network like LATN where policy and bargaining take place at regional and national levels it was especially relevant to single out possible participants with an interest to remain rooted and develop expertise with a regional and national focus. Also important is to identify prospective members with potential entrepreneurial qualities. Funding is a particularly important factor in the sustainability of research networks, and members with guaranteed funding (from student fees, for example) will be probably less amenable to seeking varied sources of funding and of considering the research of the network as a fundamental source of project finance and income. Members whose future, survival and evolution is more dependent on the success of the network will commit more effectively to its success and growth. In cases of policy influence, the structure of membership gains more relevance as the potential of a network to influence policy depends, partly, upon the diverse people involved and their commitment to the network. John Graham (2005 quoted in Currie-Alder) suggests that having policy-makers participate in the network and actively share in the learning process is a more effective means of policy influence than simply sending them the final results. Tyler (2005 quoted in Currie-Alder) also notes that including policy-makers in the networks helps to identify additional audiences for disseminating research findings and additional opportunities to influence policy (Currie-Alder, 2005: 4). This view has appeared repeatedly in the documentation available to this review and it is widely shared by coordinators, network members and IDRC staff alike. Although the presence of practitioners and policy makers in networks is considered an effective way of ensuring that the research developed is relevant and timely it is not, however, free of controversy. If trying to operate in a highly political terrain demands careful treading to avoid over politicizing a network's research agenda, the presence of decision-makers with non-neutral interests poses a much bigger challenge. Leaders and coordinators therefore need to be aware of the cleavages present in its membership and attempt to strike a balance conducive to the achievement of network goals. In these cases, coordinators and governance arrangements need to mediate and act as the ultimate interest-broker and consensus builder in the network.

4) Key Learnings: Some Preliminary Findings

OWNERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION: AN INCREMENTAL PROCESS

Several of the documents reviewed (Adamo, 2004; Currie Alder, 2005; Pomeroy, 2002) show that governance arrangements tend to shift as networks develop. Although it is not possible to provide percentages it seems that even though several IDRC network projects are initially managed and coordinated by rather centralized forms of leadership (main leader and or IDRC) as networks progress, governance structures and mechanisms shift to become more inclusive. Participation and ownership thus appear to expand probably as a result of responsibilities becoming more widely shared among members.

Example 1

- (i) 'Next phase... We are now thinking of greater responsibility of partners in governance'
 - (ii) 'Very coordinator driven at the outset...now becoming more participatory; this has been an organic driven evolution'
- (Smutylo, 2005: 21)

Such progressions have been already noted: '... Simpler networks- and networks in formation- depend on the leadership skills of a select number of individuals that act as coordinators; whereas in more complex networks - in more established or less formal networks- leadership depends on the skills and active participation of the network members.' (Currie-Alder, 2006). This trend in more inclusive forms of governance also takes into account IDRC devolution processes where the Centre actively promotes the thorough engagement of partner institutions in all aspects of network management.

It is not very clear, however, how these processes have been taking place or which are the different decision-making mechanisms present to formalize greater member participation in the different instances. More

information about them would undoubtedly help to identify what strategies/ mechanisms have been most beneficial in this transition. Transparency and accountability are also relevant factors that establish more favourable environments towards greater participation. Clear lines of accountability, as has been previously discussed, may help pre-empt conflict and tensions among network members.

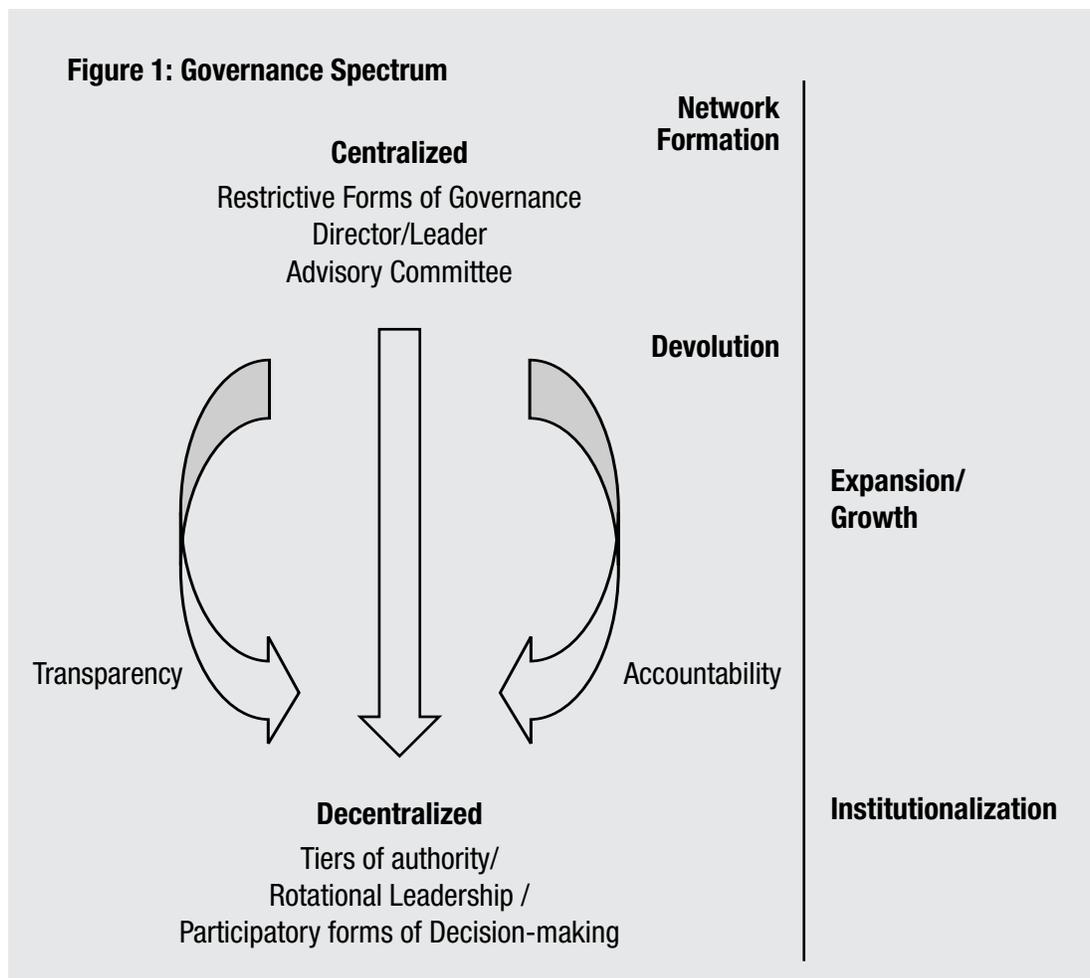
In the experience of LATN, the path towards a more decentralized governance structure was a gradual result of a process of growth of the network and 'growth of commitment' from selected members where it became evident that certain members had placed higher stakes in the expansion of the network than others. This process of 'interest and commitment catalyzation' was of crucial relevance to identify the appropriate stakeholders that were to provide the network with the support and expertise needed for its growth. For the reviewers, this constitutes a process that cannot be rushed or precipitated but that unfolds as the networks' challenges expand. These members became part of a Steering Committee in charge of taking the most important strategic, budgetary and administrative decisions of the network. Six different institutions constitute the Steering Committee and three additional regional offices were created to further decentralize decision-making and management responsibilities. In this context, the network becomes a conduit that contributes to the expansion and improvement of both individual and institutional efforts of members.

Example 2: Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network (AFSSRN)

'Under phase III, the team leaders and members became more active in establishing the future directions of the network. At a team leader's meeting, each team was asked to present its institutional and national research agenda priorities for use in defining a strategic agenda for phase VI'

(Pomeroy, 2002: 14)

The figure below is a straightforward diagram of the progressive development of networks and it incorporates transparency and accountability as factors favouring more decentralized forms of governance.



In order to provide some set of dimensions that have proved successful in network development future research may want to pay more attention to the development of two mechanisms of decision-making, the expansion of consensus building within networks, and the emergence of different tiers of decision-making within networks. The literature and reviews have not elaborated in detail how these two instances of decision making develop, how tiers inter-relate, which functions they exercise and how these functions have been delegated.

Although horizontal and participatory networks are highly desirable outcomes, there is the danger of networks becoming too horizontal and risking the continuity or efficacy of the network. There are dangers in excessive egalitarianism that may lead to a generalized lack of direction and non-enforcement of responsibilities and commitments. A balance in leadership is therefore necessary to ensure greater membership involvement but accompanied by clear direction and compliance with network obligations (ALF, 2005: 51).⁴

· ***GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES ARE MULTIPLE AND CONTEXT-SPECIFIC***

The forms governance arrangements may take are multiple and context-specific. The documents reviewed suggest that similar arrangements may produce varying results and that a large number of factors are in place to produce particular outcomes. For this reason, it becomes impossible to establish generalized causal relationships, as even the simplest of policy recommendations—for example: “have a board that sets strategic direction”—is contingent on a large number of judgment calls about the context in which it will be implemented. Furthermore, the pre-existing institutional landscape will typically offer both constraints and opportunities, requiring creative shortcuts or bold experiments. From this perspective, the “art” of networking consists of selecting appropriately from a potentially infinite menu of governance designs to what is more suitable to those network goals in a specific setting.

The experiences show us that there may be multiple ways of packing incentives into specific institutional arrangements and the different packages will have different costs and benefits depending on prevailing constraints, levels of knowledge, resources available, etc.

Despite the fact that each network scenario is unique, the reviewers would like to draw attention to certain issues that may help to reflect and assess different governance alternatives. These points are largely based on the experience of the LATN network and on the documentation available for this evaluation. It is important to note that these recommendations do not constitute best practice suggestions but are rather tentative pointers for reflection.

Pointers for Reflection

- Governance structures evolve constantly in terms of goals, membership and outputs. Therefore networks may benefit from governance arrangements that would make adjustments and transitions easier. This can entail less formalized structures, limited bureaucracy, and minimal hierarchy (Bernard, 1996: 27).
- The development of more structured forms of governance is a gradual process and a result of well established and more integrated membership.
- Consider supporting the development of corporate/ institutional memory that may provide alternative means of continuity in case of faltering leadership.
- Greater coordination work may be needed in regional and global networks due to their weaker integration and cohesion.

As governance structures evolve with the network, governance arrangements should preferably show flexibility. For this reason, less formal and broadly defined governance structures are more suitable to accommodate transitions and processes of change, particularly in the first stages of network development. In the case of LATN, more formalized structures of governance appeared only over time and once the network had developed more adaptive capacities and had achieved a certain degree of resilience. The fact that coordination

⁴ This tension was also recognized as an important challenge in coordination activities (Smutylo, 2005: 23).

arrangements were minimal and that no mandates and functions had been formally established greatly helped in the search of alternative structures of governance that better represented the network's evolution. Governance flexibility can also be reflected in minimal instances of hierarchy and in a reduced bureaucratic apparatus and administration.

The presence of a corporate/institutional memory can also be considered as a useful institutional mechanism that may provide networks with sturdier and more foreseeable frames of reference. If the leadership should drastically change or be replaced for a period of time, the presence of accumulated and refined coordination expertise will allow the network and principal stakeholders to cope more efficiently with the apparent absence of direction. An institutional memory can also help to keep track of the successful strategies instrumented and mistakes incurred through the formation and expansion of the network thus maximizing the use of knowledge that has been accrued. Networks do not just accumulate research outputs, they also accumulate contextual information, skills and knowledge that should be passed on to additional nodes, project leaders and champions (ALF, 2005: 14).

Another important issue to take into account is the fact that regional and global networks are probably more labour-intensive and will require more constant work to maintain their cohesion and shared vision and values. This is due to larger number of actors, greater instability in the membership, lower institutionalization of interactions, and less agreement of basic ideas (Heritier, as quoted in Coleman and Perl, 1999: 13). This entails that coordination and governance arrangements in transnational networks should pay particular attention to the creation of practices and instances dedicated to network building and information sharing so as to foster greater integration and a greater sense of belonging. Frequent meetings, seminars and joint briefs to advertise the joint avenues of work are only some examples of activities conducive towards creating a sense of community.

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

As indicated previously, even though many IDRC projects are coordinated by IDRC project officials or other Northern partners, reviewers have found that there is an increasing interest in the Center to devolve to partner institutions in the South the leadership role and control in the administration of networks.⁵ This interest can be attributed to an increasingly accepted perception in development circles that research needs to be driven by stakeholders and linked to its specific context (ALF, 2005: 10). This perception is very much in line with wider development notions that push forth 'bottom-up' approaches and 'driver-seat' strategies.

In case of IDRC, as pointed by Adamo, the intention seems directed at encouraging networks, where possible, to assume responsibility and authority for defining, planning, executing and controlling the network's agenda (2005: 35). The underpinning rationale is that if networks have sufficient capacity to take leadership and coordination roles, devolving network management to regional partners may contribute to greater local ownership and sustainability of networks (2005: 35). This increasing urgency to devolve to regional partners is based on the belief that they are not only capable, but often best placed to manage networks more effectively. Moreover, devolution empowers Southern research systems and ensures that the network remains relevant (Wind, 2005: 5). In these cases devolution is overarching and it entails the introduction of any changes and adjustments to grant guidelines, criteria, conditions and processes (RP 101060 Proposal, 2001: 4 as quoted in Adamo, 2005: 35). If networks have the necessary skills and sufficient capacities to control the processes of governance and coordination, the transfer will significantly enhance greater local ownership and the sustainability of networks. One of the main advantages of devolution is that the coordination of research networks ensures not only that the dependence on IDRC's limited resources is reduced, but also that established and well-informed people will manage these networks (Adamo, 2005: 5; 35).

As with most objectives, the building of capacity in the South requires the control and ownership of both priority and processes (Lusthaus and Neilson, 2005: 16). For this reason, one of IDRC's main goals has been to make sure that indigenous research in the South should be locally driven and locally used (Carden, 2005: 2). Despite the rather universal acceptance of such notions in development circles, donor-recipient dynamics and power asymmetries between different parties still affect the establishment of priorities and agendas and pose challenges to effective local leadership.

5 According to the Decima survey 16% of networks are coordinated by IDRC (2006: 84-85)

The process of devolution and how local leadership develops, however, does not appear to reviewers to be documented in detail. Clear and precise records of how these processes have taken place and their implications to governance remain somewhat limited.

Issues to consider

- How are Southern-partner capacities best evaluated before devolution processes?
- Which are the most important skills and capabilities that need to be in place for devolution to be successful?
- What percentage of devolution processes have been successful?
- What mechanisms help to make networks more locally driven?
- Which governance arrangements made transitions easier?

· COMMITTED AND STABLE DONOR ROLE

IDRC's commitment and long-term involvement with research networks is generally considered very positively among recipients. The presence of the Centre in several guises according to network's needs has granted the institution with a certain versatility that is greatly valued. It has been this versatile nature as a donor that has allowed the Centre to continue its support in various different capacities. According to the Decima survey IDRC plays a number of different roles in networks. The most relevant role is as a funder (85%); next to it, is its role as advisor (42%). In 32% of cases it holds membership in networks and in 16% of cases it holds a role as a coordinator (2006: 85). What these numbers basically show is that the Centre has made a point of supporting research networks in almost any way they can, ranging from funding to undertaking actual coordination responsibilities. IDRC presence is also valued because it stretches over time giving networks a sense of stability and bringing different types of support where necessary. Even though its participation in the networks might decrease as networks gain more ownership and autonomy, IDRC involvement and support has remained constant in several instances facilitating transitions and softening change.

An additional point to be made here is that unlike many other international institutions in development, IDRC has made efforts to allow flexibility in networks so that they can learn and evolve. Many researchers expressed their appreciation for IDRC's flexible approach which facilitated and contributed to bringing local knowledge into the development of a project (Universalia, 2006: 35). This is a particularly important achievement (even if only moderate) in the area of international development where, despite recent efforts by several international institutions, local ownership still lags far behind.

In which specific ways the Center has contributed to processes of governance and coordination remains unclear to this evaluation report (as pointed out in section 2) and greater detail would be highly desirable to attempt to provide different explanations about the results produced by different governance arrangements in IDRC research networks.

· LEADERSHIP

The fundamental role of the coordinator/leader is unquestionably a major conclusion reached by several of the evaluations analyzed. Both for IDRC staff and network members, leadership is a key factor necessary for the successful work of a network.

The qualities of a coordinator/leader appear to have been a point of reflection and debate among IDRC staff and research network members. It seems that a promising leader needs to be able to elicit trust, should be able to manage administrative tasks and human relations, and should show exceptional research and mentoring capacities. According to participants at the ALF, the role of leadership is fundamental to provide guidance and direction to the network vision (ALF, 2005: 28). Currie-Alder summarized leadership qualities as requiring 'facilitation skills, management skills and reputed research capacity' (2005: 6). Smutylo noted that interviewees placed a great deal of importance on leadership and mentoring capacities and mentioned that the three most important skills for a network coordinator considered were project and program management, group facilitation and expertise in the network's area of research (ALF, 2005: 20). These analyses indicate the

relevance attributed to coordination and leadership roles and what seems to be a generalized consensus on the capabilities that leaders should be able to show. There is little reference, though, to the relevant role that steering and advisory committees can play as mechanisms to share leadership, support the direction of the network and enhance sustainability. It could be argued that one of the most important roles of governance arrangements is to facilitate the challenging tasks faced by coordinators. Further analysis on steering/advisory committees may help to illuminate what division of labour and cooperation is best suited to enhance shared leadership in a way that increases ownership and promotes sustainability.

The diversity of the network composition, of backgrounds among members and of cultures among countries, suggest that coordination's responsibilities should contemplate mediating abilities in order to deal with issues of conflict resolution (ALF, 2005: 31). The presence of differences in a network can cause conflict and undermine the collaboration and exchange fundamental to the network exercise. In multidisciplinary and regional networks, in particular, one of the main roles of network leaders appears to be helping members deal constructively with the negative differences encountered, clarifying and defining goals, establishing a sense of shared purpose and confirming a minimum of common values (Bernard, 1996: 26). In networks whose membership is mixed and include policy makers and practitioners, leaders and coordinators should be careful and aware of the cleavages present in its membership in order to strike a balance conducive to the achievement of network goals. In these cases, coordinators and governance arrangements need to act as brokers among network parties and interests.

Given the demanding requirements needed for what has been described as a capable and competent coordination, an area that remains largely understudied and that needs urgent exploration relates to the incentives in place to inspire leadership and to maintain already successful structures of leadership. What are the main reasons and interest that can mobilize coordinators and steering/advisory members for such a demanding job? And what latches and hooks can coordinators and advisory members introduce to pull in new membership and research that may be conducive to network expansion?

Issues for Consideration

- What type of governance mechanisms and arrangements can best support the challenging tasks of leadership?
- Which incentives have proved to be best suited to inspire/maintain leadership?
- What practices can Coordinators instrument to mediate and conciliate differences stemming from cultural backgrounds and diverse research focuses?

GOVERNANCE AND COORDINATION CHALLENGES

This section draws to some extent from Smutylo's analysis on coordination challenges from the interviews conducted with IDRC program staff and network coordinators in 2005 (2005: 22-23) and has incorporated some additional issues identified in the revised documentation.

Diversity of membership: Several difficulties seem to arise for a coordinator as he/she needs to deal with different languages, diverse cultural backgrounds, differing organizational practices and different strengths and research capabilities. As explained in previous sections the richness of diversity and exchange within a network can also generate conflict and distrust posing coordinators with the additional task of acting as mediators and facilitators. In some particular cases, such as in the promotion of trust and ownership, these differences can be particularly tricky as they are embedded in social norms and implicit values. Leaders and coordinators therefore should be ready to intervene and as act as facilitators in order to ensure group cooperation. In many cases if this were not possible it remains for the network governance to decide when it is best to insist on mediation and when it is best to exclude a member that does not pull its weight in a network.

Local organization capacity: Coordinating a network of transnational researchers poses several challenges in terms of administrative practices and skills present in the local environment. In many cases this difficulty cannot be easily overcome and IDRC has had to step up and undertake coordination responsibilities until local capacity could be generated. If local capacity is absent, these processes may be more protracted and chal-

lenging as managing and administrative costs are labour-intensive to acquire and demand additional funds to support the supplementary training.

Relationship with donors: Of particular importance for members has been finding secure and stable sources of funding. This particular challenge has been repeatedly raised as one of the main concerns of network members (Adamo, 2005; Bernard, 1996). Limited resources and sharp competition are not new and have been part of the development world for a while. In this context leaders and network stakeholders with entrepreneurial aptitude should be considered as a substantive asset.

Creating and expanding participatory open processes: A further challenge encountered relates to striking the right balance in coordination activities between providing firm direction and expanding inclusion and involvement to increase member ownership and control. Fostering communication and member participation is a crucial dimension of the success and sustainability of networks. There is a fine line and balance between centralized relations to enforce commitments and deadlines and the promotion of greater involvement to enhance the sense of participation and ownership in a network.

Networks have been considered as particularly well suited to promoting multi-stakeholder approaches to research so that networks: ‘...horizontalize and democratize the process of concept construction, operationalization, and research, and they erode traditional hierarchies of knowledge and expertise’ (Gross Stein and Stren as quoted in Adamo, 2005: 22). Although these trends are quite incipient there is some hope that networking can promote a new culture of management characterized by open information sharing, consultation with stakeholders, and decision-making based on research evidence. In this sense, it appears that IDRC funded research has a potential to affect not only what policies are, but also how they are made (Carden, 2005: 4).

Building active linkages with the external context: This constitutes a particularly important challenge especially in those networks that are oriented towards influencing policy. As explained in the section on outcomes, there are difficulties in presentation and communication that need to be addressed if networks want to be heard. More importantly, there may be more fundamental problems in terms of how the engagement with the external context should take place. Policy influence constitutes a controversial issue among academic circles that may consider that any kind of political engagement can endanger the independence and objectivity of the research and expertise developed. In such cases, reaching internal consensus may prove more difficult and either network goals or membership may need to be revised.

5) Recommendations

- In order to understand more about how governance structures may affect network and development outcomes it becomes necessary to collect more governance-specific information both from project documentation and interviews. Identifying more systematically governance structures and their influence on network goals would greatly contribute to the analysis of current trends and drawing lessons useful for the development community at large.
- Additional information about governance and coordination mechanisms does not need additional or separate surveys and evaluations. A large part of relevant data can be collected -if not analyzed- in standard project evaluations.
- In order to ensure that most network projects are coordinated by partner institutions, IDRC should devote some resources for the development of institutional capacity in areas of management, resource mobilization, administration and evaluation. Evaluations and interviews show repeatedly that IDRC might want to strengthen capacity building in the area of network management and on their partners’ capacities to publish, access information, manage projects, and mobilize resources other than those of the donor (ALF, 2005: 23, 26).
- The introduction of a Framework for Network Planning as suggested by Smutylo (2005) may prove to be a very useful approach for networks, although the degree of usefulness will probably depend on the stage of network development where the framework is used.

If the framework is employed at the initial stages of network planning and design, reviewers believe that such a strategy could constitute a useful road-map for analyzing and thinking about some the fundamental issues

(such as goals and objectives; strategies and activities, integrated collaboration, leadership and decision-making, -Smutylo, 2005:12-13). However, it must be emphasized that this is an ambitious road-map and that potential network members and coordinators will probably be unable to take decisions regarding many of these issues. The stage of development may not be ripe to answer in a clear and committed manner to many of the questions presented in the framework. In other cases, given the preliminary nature of initial stages of network formation some of the decisions may not be sustainable. For example, even if governance decisions were established this does not guarantee that they will be respected and enforced. Institutional arrangements have a way of becoming embedded or not depending on a variety factors that lead to their proper establishment or demise. It may well be that the decisions then adopted were not adequate to the development the network experienced therefore rendering them ineffective. However, the reflection and assessment that such a framework demands constitutes a practical and constructive exercise that may indeed give potential network members and coordinators direction and help to realize some of the challenges and issues at stake. For monitoring and evaluation purposes, reviewers believe that the framework constitutes a very valuable tool. Such a framework would help 'build monitoring and evaluation into the network (and) provide spaces to assess a network's focus, systems, structures, functions and products, and plan adaptations as necessary' (Wind, 2004: 30) in a more *systematic way*. Internal processes of self-reflection could also greatly benefit from the framework as it provides a template for self-assessment at different stages of network development. Reviewers believe that networks may also benefit from access to more detailed information about how many of the challenges and decisions addressed by the framework were dealt with and handled in other experiences. However, it is very probably that, though useful, such additional information would not be cost-effective.

REFERENCES

- Adamo, A. 2005. *A Review of IDRC Documentation on the Intended Results of IDRC's Support of Networks (1995-2004)*. IDRC Strategic Evaluation
- Adamo, A. 2005. *The Intended Results of IDRC's Support of Networks: Extension, Excellence, Action, and Autonomy*. IDRC Short Highlight.
- Bernard, A. 1996. *IDRC Networks: An Ethnographic Perspective*. IDRC Evaluation Document.
- Balgescu, M. and Young, J. 2005. *Partnership and Accountability: Current Thinking and Approaches among Agencies Supporting Civil Society Organizations*. ODI/RAPID Working Paper 255, www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Documents/WP255.pdf
- Carden, F. 2005. *Capacities Capacities, Contexts, Conditions: The Influence Of IDRC -Supported Research On Policy Processes*. IDRC Short Highlight
- Carden, F. and Nielson, S. 2005. *Confluence and Influence. Building policy capacities in research networks' in D. Stone and S. Maxwell (eds.) Global Knowledge Networks and International Development. Bridges Across Boundaries*. New York: Routledge.
- Coleman, W. D. and Perl, A. *Internationalized Policy Environments and Policy Network Analysis' Political Studies*. (1999) XLVII, pp. 691-709.
- Creech, H. and Willard, T. 1991. *Strategic Intentions: Managing Knowledge Networks for Sustainable Development*. www.iisd.org/pdf/2001/networks_strategic_intentions.pdf
- Currie-Alder, B. 2005. *Learning about Networks: Insights from Recent PCRs*. IDRC Report
- Decima Research. 2006. *Survey of Coordinators and Members of IDRC-supported Networks. (1995-2005) Final Report*
- IDRC. 2005. *Allies for development*. IDRC Short Highlight
- IDRC. 2005. *Annual Learning Forum (ALF)*. http://www.idrc.ca/ev_en.php?ID=65289_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC
- IDRC. 2005. *Annual Learning Forum (ALF) Report*. IDRC Report
- Keck, M. and Sikkink K. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders, Cornell*. Cornell University Press.
- Kenis and Scheneider. 1991. *Policy Networks and Policy Analysis: Scrutinizing a New Analytical Toolbox*. in B. Marin and R. Mayntz (eds.) *Policy Networks: Empirical Evidence and Theoretical Considerations*, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Lusthaus, C. and Neilson, S. *Capacity Building at IDRC: Some Preliminary Thoughts*. Universalia Management Group (Draft).
- Macadar, L. 2003. *Latin American Trade Network LATN*. IDRC Evaluation Document
- Pomeroy, B. 2002. *A Case Study Analysis of the Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network (AFSSRN)*. IDRC Evaluation Document
- Schenk, I. 2005. *Structured Flexibility: The Governance, Coordination, and Outcomes of IDRC Supported Networks*. IDRC Evaluation Document
- Tussie, D. 2003. *A Study of Policy Influence: The G-24 Technical Support Services*. IDRC Evaluation Document
- Smutylo, T. 2005. *Fostering Collaboration in Development Research: A Report on Interviews with IDRC Program Staff & Network Coordinators*. IDRC Evaluation Document
- Stone, D. Maxwell, S. and Keating, M. 1991. *Bridging Research and Policy' Paper prepared for an International Workshop*. Warwick University, 16-17 July 2001
- Stone, D. and Maxwell, S. 2005. *Global Knowledge Networks and International Development. Bridges Across Boundaries*. Global Knowledge Networks and International Development, New York: Routledge.
- Wind, T. 2004. *Network Sustainability*. IDRC Evaluation
- Wind, T. 2005. *The Sustainability of IDRC supported Networks*. IDRC Short Highlight
- Universalia Management Group. 2006. *Capacity Building at IDRC: Results and Factors Supporting*. Draft Evaluation Document