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Information and Communication Technologies and Global Environmental Organizations: the International Union for Conservation of Nature

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INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS: THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

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Nature sustains all aspects of human life and provides food, medicine, innovation, recreation and shelter. Although often considered as an inalterable everlasting given, the earth is in a continuing process of adaptation to human needs and suffers more and more losses in terms of species, ecosystems and beauty. Demographic and economic booms of the last decades put pressure on the earth's natural resources and capacity of adaptation. As indicated in the 2014 Synthesis Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and many of the observed changes such as warmer atmosphere and ocean, diminished amounts of snow and ice, or higher sea levels are unprecedented over decades to millennia.

Contrary to local actors and in particular the civil society, global institutions are often denounced for being non-democratic and detached from the reality of the field. However, global multi-stakeholders' cooperation and global to local ownership of nature conservation mechanisms to protect nature is not only necessary but also possible thanks to the generalization of new information and communication technologies (ICT). Internet, social media, mobile phones, and big data are some of the most well-known disruptive technologies with the potential to transform all aspects of human life and society in an ongoing process of change. The implications of the generalization of ICT are part of a vast change of paradigm where new technologies are only one factor of change among others.

ICT have transformed many elements of our lives and societies. This working paper seeks to determine if they have also had an impact at the global level. It seems indeed

quite evident that players on the international stage use more intensively these new technologies nowadays than they did twenty years ago. However, the question remains open when it comes to examine the impact of these new technologies on their internal activities.

This working paper focuses on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for it is the oldest international environmental organization and a leading authority on environment conservation and sustainable development. Its longstanding participation in global environmental governance led, for instance, to the creation of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Also, IUCN has a decentralized structure with more than 1,200 members ranging from states, IOs and NGOs. It is one of the rare institutions that give an official voting status to NGOs through its General Assembly and the IUCN's resolution and recommendation process.

This working paper analyzes the impact of ICT on three information-based activities: knowledge management, internal communications and membership services. In other words, this paper examines if the use of ICT has improved the capacity of the organization to produce and disseminate scientific knowledge, as well as to communicate internally and with its membership.

IUCN's Governance structure

Founded in 1948, the International Union for Conservation of Nature is the oldest global environmental organization. Although unknown to the general public, IUCN supports scientific research and manages field projects all over the world. IUCN is a membership organization, which means it provides services to a group of member organizations and governments, who joined the organization to benefit from these services: practical solutions to conservation and biodiversity challenges, scientific and policy knowledge, influence international agreements, and network with an extensive community. To achieve these objectives, the organization has developed complex

internal governance mechanisms, which require the organization to communicate and share information intensively between several locations throughout the world.

IUCN is often described as a hybrid organization: its members are governmental and non-governmental organizations. Some of its main donors are states and governmental development organizations, but the majority of members are NGOs as stated previously. In most communications, IUCN introduces itself as a Union composed of various bodies: a Secretariat, a Council, the Members Assembly, six Commissions, and numerous national and regional Committees. The Secretariat supports the work of the organization with over 1000 staff located at headquarters in Switzerland and in a web of regional and local offices throughout the world. It is divided into core functions such as finance, communications, human resources, and programs, such as water, forest or global policy.

IUCN Members meet every four years at the World Conservation Congress (WCC). IUCN Members' Assembly (MA) is the highest governing body of the organization. All members meet and decide on the work of the organization for the next four years. Each member has also the possibility to take part in the preparation of IUCN's program, and to propose motions that will be then debated and voted on. The MA elects the Council every four years and counts a President, Treasurer, three representatives from each region, and the Chairs of the six Commissions. The Council meets twice a year and functions as a Board of Directors: it represents the members in between the General Assembly meetings, approves finances, and decides on the strategy.

At national and regional levels, some member organizations joined forces and created national and regional Committees to coordinate their work and participation in the Union's global project. Some Committees have grown over the last decades with their own budget, donors, logos and projects. This is the case of the Dutch, Spanish or French Committees. National committees have no specific link with their respective governments, and therefore are free to take position and action freely.

Commissions are another essential body of IUCN's internal governance mechanisms. They consist of voluntary scientists who produce conservation knowledge, policy and technical advice. They are divided into six thematic Commissions: the Commissions on

Ecosystem Management (CEM) that aims at guiding the management of natural and modified ecosystems; the Commission of Education and Communication (CEC), which promotes sustainability through education and communication; the Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy (CEESP) advising on economic and social factors that affect natural resources; the World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) that aims at advancing environmental laws and its application; the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) advising and promoting terrestrial and marine reserves, parks and protected areas; and finally the Species Survival Commission (SSC), which supports species conservation and protecting endangered species.

IUCN collaborates with the private sector at multiple levels to foster green economy and new business practices compatible with the goals of sustainable development. It advises companies from industries with large 'footprint' such as mining, fishing, agriculture and forestry, and 'green' enterprises including renewable energy and nature-based tourism.[1] IUCN also develops new knowledge with the private sector, to improve corporate environmental performance, and implement joint conservation projects. However, entities from the private sector cannot become an IUCN member, and therefore cannot vote or participate in the organization's internal governance mechanisms.

The organization designs a four-year program to plan and organize its actions. This program, designed by all members of IUCN through an extensive participatory process, is then adopted by the Members' Assembly at the World Conservation Congress. Together with the UN Earth Conferences, WCC is the most important conservation events in the world. The first Congress was held in Fontainebleau in 1948 and the most recent one took place in Hawaii, USA in September 2016. It brings together IUCN members, but also other environmental organizations, and world leaders from various sectors: governments, the public sector, non-governmental organizations, business, UN agencies and social organizations.

The World Conservation Congress contains two parts. First, the Forum is the place

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[1] IUCN (2012) *Transforming business practices*. Gland, Switzerland: BBP, IUCN. Retrieved 7 May 2013 from http://iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business

where the conservation community meets with the objective of exchanging ideas on how to better manage nature in regard to human, social and economic development. During these days, workshops and conferences are organized; publications and scientific research are launched. Following this first part, the second part of the Congress, the Members' Assembly gives voice to members, who vote on the program, elect the council, and debate on the proposals made by other members.

Before each Congress, an audit (entitled external reviews)[2] is conducted by an external audit company, which is then presented to Members. The external reviews range from early 1990s until 2015. This working paper examines the impact of ICT on knowledge management, internal communications and membership services through the analysis of these external reviews. The analysis conducted here includes all external reviews until 2011.[3] For each external review, a text analysis was performed to extract all information related to knowledge management and membership services. This paper presents the results of this text analysis in a chronological order, with the objective to highlight the increasing digitalization of the organization and its impact on knowledge management and membership services.

This research takes stock of the generalization of ICT since 2000. By this year, most global actors used already these technologies, Google had already emerged, and social media giants such as Facebook or Twitter were gaining millions and millions of users. The year 2000 will be used in this working paper to distinguish two eras: before and after the generalization of ICT. In other words, it helps better distinguish when the organization started to use ICT for its internal activities. As mentioned further, external reviews confirm this milestone.

If IUCN has become a reference in terms of biodiversity and conservation, it is not only due to its participatory governance mechanisms, but also to its capacity to produce well-recognized scientific knowledge through its members and commissions. The following section examines the impact of ICT on IUCN's knowledge management activities.

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[2] IUCN (2013) *External reviews*, Retrieved 17 July 2017 from https://www.iucn.org/fr/node/565
[3] A following edition of this paper will include the latest data from 2015.

ICT and knowledge management

Thanks to the generalization of ICT and their adoption by most organizations, information flows faster than ever between individuals, departments, and groups: more and more, knowledge is produced through collaborative group activity rather than through traditional individual scholar-researcher model. Combined with ICT, networking and mass collaboration create new knowledge. [4]

With the generalization of new technologies, knowledge is a new source of wealth and power. The content and value of knowledge are both significantly enhanced by knowledge-networking practices made possible through the use of ICT. [5] Information and knowledge have become prominent: "the proportion of knowledge-intensive jobs is high, the economic weight of information sectors is a determining factor, and the shares of intangible capital is greater than that of tangible capital in the overall stock of real capital." [6]

Knowledge management encompasses the strategies and processes to identify, capture, structure, and share an organization's intellectual assets, which in turn enhances its performance and competitiveness. It is based on the collection and dissemination of knowledge within an organization.[7] The diffusion of networking technologies and information sharing makes it possible to engage in multiparty, asynchronous, and multidirectional interactions. ICT facilitate the flow of knowledge from lower levels of to higher levels of an organization.[8]

The first external review (1993) raises the question of strategy and mentions IUCN should improve the formulation of its projects and programs. In this report, the

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[4] Choucri, Nazli (2012). Cyberpolitics in International Relations. Cambridge: MIT Press, p.74.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Choucri, Nazli (2012). Op Cit, p.73

[7] Knowledge management [Def. 1] (n.d.) *Business Dictionary Online*, Fairfax, VA: WebFinance. Retrieved 7 September 2013 from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/knowledge-management.html

[8] Choucri, Nazli (2012) Op Cit, p.72.

auditing team recommended IUCN to define better what it wishes to achieve.[9] The following external review in 1996 further advanced this request of better formulation and suggested that IUCN should define better its mission. The organization is not anymore the only global environmental organization: UNEP, WWF, Conservation International, and Greenpeace take more and more space on the international scene. Therefore, IUCN needs to determine its niche and added value.

> It was frequently pointed out that IUCN has to excel as a knowledge-based institution since its political impact is limited and it cannot make its influence felt through providing substantial financial resources to its members.[10]

Being a knowledge organization means for IUCN to capitalize on all parts of its union to produce knowledge. In other words, IUCN can count on all scientists from the six commissions, from its members and the secretariat to produce scientific data, knowledge, brochure, books, educational content about nature, conservation and biodiversity. Due to its main objective to encourage societies all over the world to conserve the integrity and biodiversity of nature, IUCN needs "(…) to capitalize on lessons learned from its operational programs, to relate them to policy advice and global issues, and also to disseminate and communicate these lessons 'widely'." [11] This question of IUCN becoming a knowledge organization is recurrent, and present prior to the generalized use of ICT.

In 1999, this question surfaces once more in the external review: it argues that IUCN should focus on "developing knowledge in the most fruitful directions."[12] Thanks to its unique network of voluntary scientists, staff and members, who count among the most

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[9] IUCN (1994) *Report of the External Review of the IUCN Programme 1991 – 1993.* Gland, Switzerland, p12. Retrieved 10 May 2013 from
http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/report_of_the_external_review_of_iucn_programme__1991_1993_.pdf

[10] Christoffersen, Leif E. (1996) *Report of the External Review of the IUCN programme*. Gland, Switzerland, p.5. Retrieved 10 May 2013 from
https://www.iucn.org/knowledge/monitoring_evaluation/database/all_iucn_evaluations/

[11] Christoffersen, Leif E. (1996) Op Cit, p.29.

[12] Bruszt, Gabor (1999) *The External Review of IUCN Programme*. Gland, Switzerland, p.35. Retrieved 10 May 2013 from http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/external_review_final.pdf

prestigious and recognized people in the conservation community, IUCN seems invariably associated to knowledge and science:

> IUCN is principally a knowledge organization. Knowledge is its most valuable capital. This knowledge is diverse and dispersed. It resides in its member organizations, in the Commissions, in the Secretariat and in the networks of individuals that can be mobilized by members of each of these bodies.[13]

Furthermore, the organization is well known for its publications and scientific data. It supports governments and other organizations with policy guidelines, best practices, and educational content.[14] Although the auditing team recognizes the wealth of publications and scientific knowledge produced by IUCN, the need for a global knowledge management strategy is highlighted once more:

> There is, as yet, no overall knowledge management strategy in IUCN. If the Union is serious about nurturing its core asset, then it needs to establish a solid knowledge management system.[15]

The first audit to mention a new information and communication technology. It confirms the year 2000 is a milestone in the generalization of ICT. In response to the two previous external review's recommendations, IUCN raised funds to improve the information and communication systems in the organization.[16]

The 2003 external review is also the first one to mention IUCN's culture: it is not only about information and communication techniques but also about culture and training. Although the organization has dedicated substantial resources to adopt new technologies, the strategy training, policy, communication and change in culture accompanying the new techniques are essential for their success. In other words, if two people do not speak, providing them with computers and Internet will not improve their communication. Internet emailing and Skype for instance are technologies successfully applied if strategy, culture and cooperation patterns allow. Knowledge

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Bruszt, Gador (1999) Op Cit, p.35.

management does not improve solely thanks to ICT:

> Of course, as with all such information systems, the value of the Network is a function not only of its technical design and management but the enthusiasm with which its users feed material into it. A brief scan of the Network suggests that that enthusiasm is not universal in the Secretariat.[17]

What the auditing team recommends is a fundamental change, a deep transformation of IUCN's culture and communication patterns. It does not specifically mention ICT:

> Its professional staff must be more competent in understanding the situations and processes of learning and the management of knowledge, more sensitive to and skillful in capacity building and empowerment, and better in policy research, influence and communication between global, national and regional levels. [18]

Change is probably more difficult but also highly necessary to implement in a decentralized and global organization with offices spread throughout the planet and a complex governance structure.[19] The complexity of the organization's structure and governance mechanisms is further mentioned by an expert from the external review team: "In dealing with IUCN, one must bear in mind that there never has been, and undoubtedly never will be, any other human organization even remotely resembling it." [20] In 2003, the auditing team also suggests strengthening the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) procedures to capitalize on the lessons-learnt:

> There is a need to improve communications, feedback systems, opportunities for dialogue and lessons learned from M&E work. There are inadequate resources allocated to M&E learning efforts… and there is a need to strengthen M&E capacity at country and regional levels to capture and use knowledge generated from projects and evaluations. [21]

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[17] Ibid, p.18.

[18] Bruszt Gabor (2003) Op Cit, p.51.

[19] Ibid, p.35.

[20] Ibid, p.39.

[21] Ibid, p.18.

The following external review in 2007 precisely stipulates the necessity to "strengthen IUCN as a knowledge organization."[22] This recurrent suggestion is highlighted in several parts of the report: "Other reviews, including external audits, have pointed out that IUCN is lagging behind other organizations in knowledge management."[23] The report also mentions the urgent need to develop "a complete, functional and interactive database that can be used by the secretariat to (…) support networks or communities of practice across the Union that link members and Commissions within the framework of the IUCN Program."[24]

By 2007, ICT are well used in all parts of the organization. But they do not seem to have facilitated the change at IUCN. Indeed, what is at stake (and what was at stake before Internet) is a profound transformation of IUCN's culture. If IUCN does not focus its development strategy on becoming a learning and knowledge organization it will lose its competitiveness:

> If IUCN is to remain competitive, it needs to rethink its knowledge management policies and open up access to tools like the Knowledge Network. In other words, while putting in place immediate reforms, IUCN should also 'think big' for more fundamental changes to how IUCN conducts its business as a knowledge organization over the medium to longer term.[25]

For instance, the auditing team recommends to better accompanying the implementation of new technologies with training and policies, and in particular "develop new guidelines for sharing knowledge with members, Commission members, and partners." [26]

Using ICT to communicate is similar to other communication channels. A strategy is needed: "The overall communications to members individually and collectively must be

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[22] Woodhill, Jim, Whyte, Anne (2008) *The External Review of IUCN Programme*, Vol.2. Gland, Switzerland, p.80. Retrieved 10 May 2013 from http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/final_er_vol_1_synthesis_report_15_apr.pdf

[23] Woodhill, Jim,Whyte, Anne (2008) Op Cit, p.vi.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid, p.v.

[26] Ibid, p.81.

strategic and not chaotic."[27] It is not enough to send emails to have an effective communication. It is not enough to use an intranet to become more efficient. IUCN is using an intranet, Skype, emails. But it is essential to understand why these tools are used, train staff, and promote what they are developed for: implementing a global strategy focused on knowledge management.

The IUCN council identified three objectives and states once more what the external reviews suggested: (1) put in place basic organizational Internet systems to support and foster knowledge management; (2) strengthen knowledge creation, sharing and learning across organizational boundaries and shift the focus towards more efficient and concerted analysis and synthesis; and (3) strengthen capacities to assist, empower and influence target audiences.[28] However, as the 2007 external review notices, the organization still needs to implement this strategy, even though "improved knowledge management is no longer an option in IUCN".[29]

In 2011, the last external review suggests once more to "invest in the under-resourced core functions of fundraising, M&E, and knowledge management - continue to develop critical mechanisms for information sharing, coordination and alignment."[30] In addition, its overarching recommendation is to "Critically assess and (re-) define IUCN's purpose –take progressive and decisive steps to re-discover its purpose, re-define its niche as the global conservation union, and re-configure the organization to meet global challenges."[31]

The same external review also recommends to better determine IUCN's purpose: "Instigate a critical external questioning of purpose and niche (...) to make transparent

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[27] Ibid, p.27.

[28] Ibid, p.25.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Poate, D., Gregorowski, R., Blackshaw, U. and Newman, S. (2011) *External Review of IUCN 2001, Final Report,* commissioned by IUCN and prepared by ITAD Ltd., United Kingdom, p.viii.

[31] Ibid.

and independent proposals about where the Union best fits and has most to contribute within the field" [32] and added value:

> Interrogate the Value Proposition and develop a Union-wide Theory of Change - manage a Union-wide consultation process to revisit the Value Proposition in order to define a statement which is unique and of practical value to managers and stakeholders.[33]

The 2011 external review states with similar words what has been recommended in the past external review: IUCN needs to have a strategy based on knowledge management, define its niche and determine its added value compared to other organizations.

As shown in this section, external reviews highlight that IUCN should dedicate more resources to the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge. If the emergence and development of ICT transformed parts of our societies, it seems it did not change substantially the knowledge management activities of IUCN. To improve knowledge production and dissemination, two elements are needed beyond the adoption of technological tools: a clear strategy, and efficient solutions to overcome resistance to change. All external reviews highlight the necessity to redefine the organization as a knowledge producer and improve the flows of information within its parts and constituents.

As stated in an external review, "communication is probably one of the most important functions of IUCN, as a complex, global organization dedicated to the generation, management and dissemination of knowledge." [34] Therefore, the following section analyzes the impact of ICT on IUCN's internal communications activities.

ICT and internal communications

Internal communications imply sharing information within an organization, including

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Bruszt,Gabor (2003) Op Cit, p.18.

via speech, telephone, radio, mail, paging, fax, closed circuit television, electronic mail, Internet connections and computer networks.[35] In 1993, the first external review mentions internal communications in a positive manner: "the information and experiences communication seem to have moved easily in a "two-way flow" between field and headquarters." [36]

IUCN's specificity is also a challenge: "IUCN derives one of its main strength from its network, from being a union of NGOs, IOs, governments, scientists, and professionals." This network is an added value only when internal communications perform well: "IUCN must also be more effective in sharing experiences within the organization, in learning from other institutions with relevant operational expertise, and in disseminating its own learning experiences." [37]

The following external review (1996) highlights the importance of internal communications and insists on improving the information sharing between members, commissions and the secretariat: "Our main first recommendation is to reinforce the view that a special strength of IUCN is the interaction between its three pillars." [38] Indeed, due to its geographically decentralized structure, interaction within IUCN does not come naturally:

> The external review team observes that the internal communication between the different components of the Union is far from satisfactory. IUCN has not made much progress in developing its capacities for learning from its own activities and programs. [39]

What is at stake here is the need for the organization to work as a union and share information and lessons learnt with all parts at all levels (local to global). [40] Interactions between regional offices, members and the commissions are described need to be

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[35] Internal communications [Def. 1] (n.d.) Business English Dictionary Online, Fairfax, VA: WebFinance. Retrieved 7 September 2013 from http://www. businessdictionary.com/definition/internal-communication.html

[36] IUCN (1994) Op Cit, p.8.

[37] Ibid, p.4.

[38] Christoffersen, Leif E. (1996) Op Cit, p.28.

[39] Ibid, p.25.

[40] Ibid.

improved. The question of language seems an issue: "some concern was expressed with regards to the language barrier, primarily in publications and communications from headquarters."[41]

In 1999, the latest 'pre-ICT' external review, the need for better coordination and work distribution between all parts of the organization is highlighted. And for the first time, the technical aspect of communications (here called telecommunications) is mentioned:

> For the multi-center concept to succeed, communications must be good and co-ordination clear. Not only must the telecommunications be efficient (and they certainly are not in all parts of IUCN's world). Everyone must know which offices are responsible for what, and all involved must optimize their internal communications to ensure that the multi-center concept enhances participation and relevance rather than exacerbating confusion.[42]

In other words, it is more a question of strategy and management than a question of technological improvement.

In the following external review in 2003, ICT are highlighted such as the intranet called the Knowledge Network. It welcomes the fact that new technologies are increasingly being adopted by the organization. However, internal communication patterns do not seem to have changed yet and the organization does not seem to have grasped all the possibilities Internet can offer.[43]

The 2007 external review reaffirms the need for IUCN to foster the use of ICT within the organization. Indeed, the report examined how the intranet was used by the secretariat to communicate with members:

> It does not appear that these communication initiatives are very successful. Very few members contribute stories or news for the e- bulletin and very few members use the IUCN Members' Portal. A visit to the Members' Portal on 27 September 2007 revealed that only 12 articles had been posted; the last post in the on-line Members' Forum was 28 March 2006; nothing was listed under the page for Members' Publications; and there were only 87

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[41] Ibid, p.15.

[42] Bruszt, Gador (1999) Op Cit, p.39.

[43] Ibid, p.18.

members (out of 1045 members) registered as users. [44]

Indeed, Members are called to participate and share their stories and accomplishments with the Union, but rarely do: "The membership Unit has to search the websites of members to find stories to put in the bulletin."[45] It seems IUCN has not yet used ICT to its full potential first due to the misuse of the current technology available, and second due to the lack new developments:

> The current state of its MIS (Management Information System) and knowledge management is hampering its efficiency and effectiveness as an organization, and preventing it from serving and engaging members as well as it should.[46]

The following external review in 2011 states that internal communication has not evolved much since 2007: 47 to 53% mention only slight change when it comes to communication between members and commissions, communication about benefits and responsibilities of members, communication between members, and the effectiveness of services offered by the secretariat.[47] In other words, communication between the different parts of the organization is more problematic and has not evolved in the last years. Internet has not empowered all parts of the organizations to communicate better and more often.

Indeed, this lack of communication between members and commissions for instance is a longstanding issue that existed before the generalization of ICT. It is about changing the culture of the organization and implementing a strategy that focuses on improving internal communications for it is an essential part of IUCN's added value and one of the main services offered to members:

> The way Commission members interact with the Secretariat and Member-organizations leads to them being not well informed about the IUCN Program or of more strategic aspects such as the Value Proposition, One Program, theory of change, and developments in planning, monitoring and

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[44] Woodhill, Jim, Whyte, Anne (2008) p.27.

[45] Ibid, p.25.

[46] Ibid, p.v.

[47] Poate, Derek, Gregorowski, Robbie, Blackshaw, Ursula (2011) Op Cit, p.117.

evaluation.[48]

This statement confirms what members mentioned in the 2007 survey: internal collaboration needs to be improved. Internet solutions such as emailing or Skype are not the solution to lack of cooperation and old communication patterns.

Cooperation between members, commission members and secretariat at HQ and regional offices does not come by itself and is a recurrent challenge. Indeed, ICT do not seem to have had any substantial impact on IUCN's internal communications over the last years. What most external reviews highlight is a problem of culture rather than a technological issue. The following section examines the impact of ICT on IUCN's membership services.

ICT and Membership Services

As a membership organization, service to members is an essential part in IUCN's work and mission. Due to their geographic locations, the use of ICT should improve the communication with all members. However, external reviews indicate that members still wish for an improved service to membership after the emergence of the ICT. Here as well, the generalized use of the ICT does not seem to change communication patterns as the following analysis indicates.

The first external review in 1996 praises the efforts made by IUCN to improve the services dedicated to its members and to recruit new ones.

> Over the last three years considerable efforts have been made to strengthen the institutional membership based of IUCN. The Director General has taken a strong stand in support of making it a more member-focused institution. Regional and country offices have sought to strengthen contacts with the existing membership and to recruit new institutional members.[49]

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[48] Ibid, p.122.

[49] Christoffersen, Leif E. (1996) Op Cit, p.5.

IUCN accompanied the growing number of members with the creation of regional and national committees all around the world. Few years before the generalization of ICT, IUCN succeeded in developing a network of members, providing support, and involving them into its governance mechanisms.

> The increasing number of National Committees represents a significant element in IUCN's global structure. Substantial efforts are being undertaken in the regional and country offices to involve members, through the National Committees, as active participants in determining the main elements of country and regional programs.[50]

The growing role of regional committees are also highlighted in the report, and in particular their role in improving information sharing at the regional level, and also in terms of political influence. [51]

The 2003 external review describes the lack of involvement of all parts of the organization in designing the program and participating more actively in the governance mechanisms. Although ICT were available and used to communicate, they did not improve the involvement of members in designing the program: "we underline the finding that one of the main ambitions of the regionalization process – the mobilization, integration and empowerment of Members – has fallen far short of even modest expectations. This ambition and task await fulfillment."[52]

This contradicts clearly the previous external review that praised regional offices as a promising political body within IUCN that unites effort within the organization. The following review will clarify this contradiction. Indeed, the same issue is raised in the next external review in 2007 and some additional explanations are provided.

> For the most part, the strategy was not operationalized and its key results were not achieved, mainly due to constraints of staff resources and adequate Internet and information systems, but also because it does not

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid, p.15.

[52] Bruszt, Gador (2003) Op Cit, p.36.

appear to have been a high priority for senior management.[53]

To summarize, the 1999 external review praises the regionalization initiative, whereas the 2003 and 2007 reviews highlight the lack of concrete results and changes: "Members look to IUCN for networking so IUCN should strengthen its capacity to support members to work together and with the Commissions".[54] If Members, Commission Members, and Secretariat cannot communicate properly and share information easily, IUCN loses its specificity of a network organization: "the three core elements in IUCN's value proposition to members are: networking, IUCN's convening power, and governmental and non-governmental members sharing the same platforms from local to global levels."[55]The review shows that members expect IUCN to provide better service thanks to better communication and information sharing.

> IUCN could do more to support members in policy influence by increasing the sharing of information and policy experience between member countries, particularly within a region so that members do not have to reinvent the wheel or miss the opportunity to build on one another's experience.[56]

The organization needs to better train staff to use ICT such as the website. Also the survey shows a need to develop content dedicated to members. This is also a question linked to the definition of IUCN's added value such as the benefits to be an IUCN's member:

> Another potential tool is the Members' Portal on the IUCN website. It provides links to the Commission websites but there is little information that is not available to the general public (an observation that led at least one member to question its added value). It is very difficult for members to find out who might have the expertise they need in the Commissions and there appear to be no special privileges for IUCN members to access the Commissions.[57]

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[53] Woodhill, Jim, Whyte, Anne (2008) Op Cit, p.x.

[54] Ibid, p.vi.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid, p.19.

In the same vein, the external review highlights the need for IUCN to define its strategy with members and improve its services to members.

> But for a long time, IUCN has under-invested in those components of the secretariat that are most critical to engage members strategically and to serve them through the provision of the services that they want. These components include dedicated staff time; communication and knowledge management tools; and organizational structures and processes.[58]

IUCN promotes its value added as a membership organization that "works for, with and through its members".[59] To achieve this goal, "better communication and collaboration within the secretariat and eventually, to the way in which the secretariat engages with members and Commissions and manages its networks and external partnerships"[60] are needed.

In the last external review conducted (2011), a survey sent to members and commission members indicated that they still would like to be more involved in the design of IUCN's strategy and program. Also, they wished to better communicate with each other and among themselves. However, the survey further indicated that internal communication had progressed over time between some parts of the Union. A majority of members confirmed (45%) that communication between the secretariat and members had improved over time.

The survey showed contrasted results: when more than half of IUCN's members knew about the 2009-2012 program, a quarter didn't know at all about the value proposition, and a significant minority of INGO and NGO members were not familiar with the program.[61] Information didn't reach all members the same way. There is a significant number of members who didn't know what to answer to the questions asked about IUCN's internal communications, strategy and policies.[62]

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[58] Ibid, p.19.

[59] Ibid, p.v.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Poate, Derek, Gregorowski, Robbie, Blackshaw, Ursula (2011) Op Cit, p.117.

[62] Ibid, p.118.

The 2011 external review recommends to "identify gaps in the Membership according to the requirements of the 2013-2016 Program and findings from the external analysis of purpose and niche, and start addressing these gaps through a new Membership Strategy."

The generalization of ICT has not improved the communication with its members. This could be explained by a couple of factors. IUCN did not invest enough resources into its membership services. Its communication patterns and management culture did not allow better participation of members into the governance mechanisms.

Another reason could be that new members of IUCN are generally small NGOs who might not have enough human resources to know about the program and IUCN's value proposition. As stated in the external review, most recent members are not yet familiar with how the organization functions, its history and the value proposition.

Conclusions

This working paper aims to contribute to the academic debate on the influence of ICT on international affairs. It examines how a global environmental organization adopts new technologies, and how these technologies transform some of its most information intensive activities: knowledge management, internal communications and membership service.

In such decentralized organization, cooperation between headquarters, regional and local offices does not come by itself and was a recurrent challenge. Although a change was expected, the analysis of external reviews showed that the organization was resistant to change. In other words, ICT did not lead to a major transformation of the organization's capacity to produce and disseminate knowledge, as well as to communicate internally and with its membership.

Adopting new technologies is complicated and very resource intensive. It should not be under-evaluated. Global environmental leaders such as IUCN have a long history of working without these new technologies. To adopt change can result costly and time

consuming, especially at times of budget constraint. However, ICT can offer real a competitive advantage. This is very true for information intensive activities such as knowledge management, internal communications and membership services.

At a time when an increasing number of global institutions offer online tools to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness, additional research should be conducted to support the design and adoption of these technological innovations.

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