

## Research Article

# Diversity Matters, Even at a Distance: Evaluating the Impact of Computer-Mediated Communication on Civil Society Participation in the World Summit on the Information Society<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*This study explores the computer-mediated communication (CMC) practices of the transnational civil society organizations involved in the United Nations-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Informed by international regime theory, this study asks four specific research questions. (1) To what degree did civil society use CMC to organize its work and participate in WSIS? (2) How did the civil society use CMC? What barriers did it face, and how did it overcome those barriers? (3) To what extent do these CMC practices reveal the existence of policy networks and their linkages with epistemic communities? (4) What was the effect of civil society's use of CMC? Using both quantitative and qualitative data from an international survey and archival research, the study finds that e-mail lists are the primary CMC tools used within the sector, although attempts have been made to introduce more sophisticated applications to aid collaboration. Within the civil society sector we find strong evidence of a readiness to collaborate along several dimensions, including high levels of cognitive and affective trust. The study finds significant civil society participation in global policy networks, with numerous explicit linkages to epistemic communities. Finally, we find that civil society has been active in nearly all of the WSIS policy processes, and developed a coherent, socially-oriented policy contribution, but has had limited overall influence on the final conference outcomes. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these findings for the global governance of cyberinfrastructure and the Information Society, and provides recommendations for the second phase of the WSIS scheduled for November 2005 in Tunisia.*

### Introduction

Bringing the global Information Society into existence requires four inter-related foci: (1) financing and developing an information infrastructure,

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1. This study is part of a larger research program called From Pawns to Partners, which has been supported by grants from Syracuse University, the Advanced Studies Center of the International Institute at the University of Michigan, as well as Microsoft Research and Hewlett-Packard. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2004 International Communication Association. Professor Cogburn would like to thank Jessica Goger for her contribution to this paper, as well as the other graduate students working in Cotelco. He would also like to thank colleagues who provided helpful insights and comments, especially Deborah Robinson, James S. Jackson, Michael Traugott, Alford Young, Michael Kennedy, Michael Cohen, Daniel Atkins, Noemi Enchautegui-de-Jesus, Brady West, Rik Panginiban, Robert Guerra, and several anonymous reviewers.

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(2) building a legal and regulatory framework, (3) stimulating multi-lingual/cultural content creation, and (4) human capacity development. Each of these areas is embedded in a dense framework of specific information and communication technology (ICT) policies. These ICT policy issues range from arcane technical matters of Internet domain names, to privacy, security, and intellectual property, and even further to the socially oriented issues of human rights, culturally sensitive content creation, and the empowerment of youth, women, and indigenous peoples. Each of these issue areas has a complex set of institutional processes through which issues are presented, framed, refined, debated, and eventually recommended as specific policy options (Kingdon, 2003).

While governments are playing a leading role in negotiating the consensus required for the emergence of an international regime to govern the global Information Society, they cannot facilitate this emergence alone (Krasner, 1983, 1991; Cogburn, 2003, 2004; Braman, 2004). The comprehensive and far-reaching implications of the Information Society demand the active participation of multiple and diverse stakeholders, who can bring to the table their knowledge, expertise, energy, ideas, resources, and solutions. Any stable regime that emerges from these processes requires substantial international cooperation across public, private, and civil society sectors in the development of consensus on the principles, values, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that will characterize the global governance of the Information Society.

Frequently, this consensus building, as well as intense contestation, occurs within specific ICT policy processes at national, regional, and international levels. Some of these policy formulation processes are driven by highly structured, formal international organizations, such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and other United Nations agencies such as United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Other highly influential policy processes, but sometimes less visible, are driven by quasi autonomous and independent, international, private-sector organizations wielding tremendous influence in global ICT policy. These organizations include the Internet Corporation for

Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Global Information Infrastructure Commission (GIIC), Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce (GBDe), and the World Economic Forum (WEF). Collectively, these multiple and competing institutional processes contribute to the global governance of the GII and potentially to the Information Society as a whole.

Within these policy processes, international conferences may sometimes play an important role as locations of contestation and consensus for the elaboration and acceptance of principles, values, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures among the participating stakeholders (Young, 1995; Dunn, 1996; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Weilemann, 2000; Cogburn, 2004). Most of these important conferences are organized by one or more of the formal or informal organizations listed above, and are highly exclusionary and elite decision-making processes (Cogburn, 2004). Increasing calls for multistakeholder participation in global governance have opened the doors to many of these elite processes (WEF, 2004). However, in most international conferences addressing information and communication policy over the last decade, developing countries and civil society organizations have been unable to wield sufficient influence to engender policy outcomes that meet their socio-economic and development goals (Cogburn, 1996; CTO, 2003; Cogburn, 2003; MacLean, 2003). Explanations for this lack of influence are legion, and range from analyses of geopolitical and economic power disparities to the inability of developing countries and civil society organizations to effectively marshal the knowledge and information resources required for data-driven public policy. The answers are most likely combinations of these factors, complicated further by the complexity of the actual regime formation processes themselves. What we do know is that simply participating in these policy formulation processes does not automatically lead to impact or effective participation.

Negotiating within these intricate international processes to achieve specific policy objectives is a daunting task, even for the most seasoned governments and private sector organizations. However, it is even more challenging for the international civil society organizations that are participating increasingly in these global multistakeholder governance processes. Complicating the role of civil society even

further is its intense heterogeneity, both in the issues around which it is organized and in its geographic and political orientation. Increasingly, civil society organizations are forming themselves into what Keck & Sikkink (1998) call transnational advocacy networks, and human rights-oriented organizations seem to be the most dominant, followed by women's rights and environmental activists (p. 10).

### **Purpose, Research Questions, and Structure**

The purpose of this article is to better understand the current structure of transnational advocacy networks in the ICT policy arena, and to assess their potential for engaging in geographically distributed knowledge work. We accomplish these goals through a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the computer-mediated communication (CMC) practices of the civil society sector involved in the United Nations-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). We also assess the impact of these CMC practices on the development of policy-actor networks and epistemic communities within the WSIS process. Informed by international regime theory, we analyze how geographically distributed and ideologically diverse elements of transnational civil society organized to participate in a complex global information and communication policy process, previously dominated by government and private sector representatives.

This study poses four major research questions. The first question asks, *Did* the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communication to organize their work and participate in WSIS? The second research question asks, *How* did the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communications? What *barriers* did these civil society groupings face, and how did they *overcome* those barriers? The third question asks, To what extent do these CMC practices reveal the existence of *policy networks* within the WSIS civil society and what is their relationship with *epistemic communities*? The fourth research question asks, What was the *effect* of the WSIS civil society's use of computer-mediated communication? Each of these questions is answered with empirical data collected specifically for this project.

This study is embedded within a larger research program called *From Pawns to Partners: Policy Laboratories and Their Impact on the Global Gov-*

*ernance of Cyberinfrastructure*. With some notable exceptions (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; O'Brien, et al., 2000; CTO, 2003; Cogburn, 2003; MacLean, 2003), most of the literature exploring the specific factors that limit the influence of developing countries and civil society organizations in these international ICT processes is largely theoretical and anecdotal. What does exist points to several potential social, political, technological, and economic variables that contribute to this ineffectiveness. This research program begins to empirically test a theoretical model of multistakeholder global governance (Cogburn, 2004) through a mixed-method analysis of the international civil society participation in WSIS and points to some of the potential uses of CMC tools to alter the existing imbalances.

### **The Challenges of Civil Society Participation in Global Governance**

While many of the international conferences described above are important, United Nations-sponsored world conferences are in a class by themselves, addressing issues as diverse as human rights, racism, gender, and the environment (Schechter, 2001). Under UN auspices, a "summit" is an international conference that meets at the highest level of officials, including heads of state, CEOs from the private sector, and executive directors and presidents from civil society. A "world summit" is an even more special designation, reserved for those global conferences that attempt to bring together as much of the leadership of humanity as possible to forge a common vision for a particular international issue. Previous world summits have included the World Summit on Sustainable Development, World Conference Against Racism, World Peace Summit, and World Summit for Social Development. The most recent of these events is the United Nations-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

#### **Official Origins of the WSIS**

Officially, WSIS emerged as a result of Resolution 73 of the 1998 Plenipotentiary Meeting of the ITU held in Minneapolis (ITU, 1998). As the governing body of the ITU, this resolution at the "plenipot" instructed the Secretary General of the ITU to "place the question of holding a world summit on the Information Society on the agenda of the United Na-

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tions Administrative Committee on Coordination [now called the United Nations System Chief Executive Board (CEB)], with a view to meeting the necessary conditions for holding such a summit before the next plenipotentiary conference" (ITU, 1998). After agreement from the CEB, the UN decided that Secretary General Koffi Anan would provide the high patronage for the Summit, with organizational responsibility resting with the ITU (UNGA 15/183, 2002).

Organizers of the Summit had the explicit goal of forging an international consensus among the major actors regarding the principles and decision-making procedures—the international regime—of the global Information Society in order that it might benefit the majority of the world's citizens.<sup>2</sup>

WSIS is a unique example of the international ICT conferences described above, and illustrates these global governance processes. One example of this uniqueness is that WSIS is attempting to address perhaps the widest range of information and communication technology policy issues of any previous international conference of this magnitude. Second, the WSIS process represents an explicit, though flawed, attempt at global multistakeholder governance, with the active recruitment and attempted involvement of thousands of civil society and private sector actors on a relatively co-equal basis with the governmental and intergovernmental actors that normally inhabit these formal intergovernmental processes. Finally, from the beginning, WSIS was authorized as one summit, to occur in two phases (UNGA, 2002). The two phases were the result of a political compromise between potential developed and developing country hosts. Phase I was authorized for Geneva, December 10–14, 2003, and Phase II was authorized for Tunisia, November 16–18, 2005.<sup>3</sup> The organizers are adamant in saying that WSIS is "one summit with two parts" and not two summits.

### *Unofficial Origins of the WSIS*

Unofficially, there has been a long string of international and regional meetings outlining and laying the groundwork for most of the issues being addressed by the WSIS process. Interestingly, most of these earlier meetings have been largely ignored by the official WSIS processes. Some of the earliest meetings held in the 1970s and '80s addressed the global imbalances of information creation and dissemination. The movement around these issues became known as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The NWICO movement galvanized activists around the world in response to a UNESCO report entitled "Many Voices, One World" (UNESCO, 1980).<sup>4</sup> In some ways the CRIS Campaign (Communication Rights in the Information Society), one of the leading organizations involved in the WSIS civil society which argues for a broader "communication society" over a narrower "Information Society," is the intellectual descendent of the NWICO (Ó Siochrú, 2004). By organizing its network as a "campaign" and framing communication as a "right," the CRIS campaign is probably the best structured organization within the WSIS civil society to represent the archetypal transnational advocacy network (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Subsequent to NWICO, there were the ITU World Telecommunications Development Conferences [starting in Buenos Aires in 1994, with subsequent conferences in Valetta, Malta (1998) and Istanbul (2002)]; the G7 Ministerial Meeting on the Information Society, held in Brussels in 1995; and the G7/Developing World Information Society and Development (ISAD) Conference held in Johannesburg in 1996 (Cogburn, 1996). For various reasons, the ISAD agenda lost momentum and global Information Society issues moved to other international forum such as the Global Knowledge Conferences held in Toronto in 1997 and Kuala Lumpur in 2000 (Cogburn, 2004).

2. See the illustration of this point in the following paragraph from the UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 authorizing WSIS. "Convinced of the need, at the highest levels, to marshal the global consensus and commitment required to promote the urgently needed access of all countries to information, knowledge and communication technologies for development so as to reap the full benefits of the information and communication technologies revolution, and to address the whole range of relevant issues related to the Information Society, through the development of a common vision and understanding of the Information Society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by governments, international institutions and all sectors of civil society." (UNGA 15/183).

3. Background interviews suggest that even these early decisions, both to hold the summit in two phases and to hold the second phase in Tunisia, were highly politically charged decisions.

4. Thanks to the German master's student, Kristina, for a discussion on the relationship between the NWICO and the WSIS, which she is researching for her master's thesis at the Open University in Berlin.

WSIS was promoted as a major step forward in global multistakeholder governance, especially in the processes of formulating global ICT policy. UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 recommended that the multiple planning processes for the Summit take place in an open and transparent manner.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the government representatives from both developed and developing countries, paragraph 5 of this resolution “encourages other intergovernmental organizations, including international and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to contribute to, and actively participate in, the intergovernmental preparatory process of the Summit and the Summit itself” (UNGA 15/83, 2002).

### ***Understanding and Contesting Civil Society***

So the transnational civil society was invited to participate in WSIS; but what is “civil society?” Defining and recognizing an international civil society sector to participate as a legitimate “stakeholder” within the WSIS processes is complex. Keck & Sikkink (1998) point to the difficulty of organizing a truly “global civil society” and instead prefer to focus in their work on more tightly integrated transnational advocacy networks. These transnational networks of activists are organized largely around shared “principled ideas or values” (Keck & Sikkink, (1998, p. 1) and operate in a transnational “arena of struggle, a fragmented and contested area where, ‘the politics of transnational civil society is centrally about the way in which certain groups emerge and are legitimized by governments, institutions, and other groups’” (pp. 33–34). This is a fairly accurate description of the organized civil society participating within the WSIS processes, the structure of which illustrates the tension between being “legitimized by governments [and] institutions” (namely the civil society structure called the Bureau) on the one hand and being legitimized by other groups and the broadest possible civil society representatives participating in the WSIS (namely the amorphous civil society structure called the Plenary) on the other hand.

Nonetheless, within the WSIS processes, some of

the civil society participants have loosely defined themselves as “organisations—including movements, networks and other entities—which are autonomous from the State, are not intergovernmental or do not represent the private sector, and which in principle, are non-profit-making, act locally, nationally and internationally, in defence and promotion of social, economic and cultural interests and for mutual benefit” (WSIS CS, 2003). Further, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the CRIS Campaign suggest the following components of a definition:

It includes representatives from “professional” and grassroots NGOs, the trade union movement, community media activists, mainstream and traditional media interest groups, parliamentarians and local government officials, the scientific and academic community, educators, librarians, volunteers, the disability movement, youth activists, indigenous peoples, “think-tanks,” philanthropic institutions, gender advocates and human and communication rights advocates. (APC/CRIS, 2003, p. 9)

Regardless of the definition used, the civil society sector represents a tremendous diversity of voices and perspectives that are critical to development of a global Information Society. This diversity could matter greatly in the ICT policy formulation process, bringing new ideas and energy to bear on old, seemingly intractable problems. To engage in the policy processes with which they are expert (such as human rights, privacy, open-source software, and Internet governance), many of these civil society actors participate actively in what some scholars call “transnational advocacy networks” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998) and form deliberate linkages with what other scholars call knowledge networks or “epistemic communities” (Haas, 1992). The diversity of expertise and perspectives represented by the transnational civil society participating in WSIS is critical to the development of the Information Society.

However, there are serious challenges affecting the participation of civil society in global multistakeholder governance processes such as WSIS. For example, these organizations vary tremen-

5. See this quote from the UNGA resolution authorizing the WSIS. “Recommends that the preparations for the Summit take place through an open-ended intergovernmental preparatory committee, which would define the agenda of the Summit, finalize both the draft declaration and the draft plan of action, and decide on the modalities of the participation of other stakeholders in the Summit.” (UNGA 15/183, 2002).

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dously in size, strength, experience, organizational capacity, ICT policy issue area, and focus. Perhaps the biggest hurdle is that the members of these organizations are geographically distributed and can have a presence in both developed and developing countries. Finding ways to knit these geographically distributed and diverse organizational strands into a coherent and representative international civil society tapestry that functions as an effective transnational advocacy network drawing on the best epistemic communities from around the world and engaging effectively in the highly complex WSIS institutional processes is a significant challenge. Newly emerging organizational models, such as the *policy collaboratory*, may offer some solutions to the challenges of geographically distributed knowledge work between developed and developing countries (Cogburn, 2003). However, such solutions require an interdisciplinary approach and draw on insights and lessons that range from sociology and communication studies, to political science, to computer-supported cooperative work.

### Method

This phase of the project employed a concurrent mixed-method design to study the impact of computer-mediated communication on civil society participation in WSIS. The study started in the period before Prepcom-3 in September 2003 and lasted until the Summit in December 2003. Two primary data collection methods were used: (1) a survey of global ICT policy leaders and (2) content analysis of archival data. Both of these methods are explored and explained below.

#### Survey Research

From November 24, 2003 through January 29, 2004, the principal investigator conducted a survey of global ICT policy leaders using a commercially available Web-based survey tool.<sup>6</sup> The survey was pilot tested in person by a convenience sample of delegates during Prepcom-3 in September 2003. To identify the pool of potential participants in the survey, an initial sampling frame ( $n = 3,190$ ) was developed from the published lists of participants in the three WSIS Preparatory Committee meetings (Prepcom-1, Prepcom-2, Prepcom-3, Prepcom-3a) in

Geneva and the ad hoc Content & Themes meeting (Paris).

After extensive cleaning of the sampling frame, including the removal of duplicate names and incorrect addresses, the final survey was sent out on November 24, 2003 to a revised frame ( $n = 2,018$ ) representing the possible participants in the survey. Both the invitation letter and the survey itself were in English (prefaced by a brief statement in Spanish and French on the importance of linguistic diversity and an apology for the English-only survey). The survey contained 83 questions (both open-ended and closed-ended), including three important nested components based on skip logic/conditional questions. In addition to individual demographic measures (age, gender, education, training, income, region, race/ethnicity, and language) and organizational characteristics (organizational size and type), the survey included a range of important measures, such as existing levels of trust, experience with ICT tools, levels of satisfaction and success in the WSIS process, experience with ICT policy processes, participation in policy networks, and use and identification of epistemic resources.

One reminder invitation was sent out to the non-responders on December 16, 2003. Of those ICT policy leaders contacted, a substantial number ( $n = 322$ ) responded, resulting in an acceptable response rate (19%) for a Web-based elite survey (Sproull, 1986; Kittleson, 1995; Nucifora, 2002; Fricker and Schonlau, 2002; Drizin, 2003; Alvarez, Sherman, & VanBeselaer, 2003). Finally, the study sample was closely correlated to both the initial frame and the full participant database on key demographic variables (e.g., region, organizational type, and gender) giving us a high level of confidence that the survey data represented the population. For some analyses, a subsample of civil society delegates was analyzed ( $n = 74$ , 28%). These civil society respondents were closely correlated with the full participant database on key demographic variables (e.g., region and gender), giving us confidence in the subsample as well.

#### Archival Research (Content Analysis)

The principal investigator for the project traveled to Geneva from September 9–29, 2003, and again from November 10–14, 2003, to attend the Third Preparatory Commission (Prepcom-3) for WSIS and

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6. The survey tool can be found at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

Table 1. Increase in Civil Society Plenary E-Mail Traffic with WSIS Events

Month	Archive File Size	Text File Size	Pages	WSIS Events
October 28, 2003	1 MB	1.1 MB	542	Resumed Prepcom-3a November 10–14 (Geneva)
September 2003	9 MB	1.9 MB	897	Prepcom-3–September 2003 (Geneva)
August 2003	491 MB	411 KB	185	(Traditional European holiday month)
July 2003	2 MB	2 MB	913	Intersessional Meeting – July 2003 (Paris)
June 2003	600 KB	120 KB	58	
May 2003	110 KB	142 KB	70	
April 2003	10 KB	32 KB	15	Second HLSOC – April 2003 (Paris)
March 2003	248 B	2 KB	1	Prepcom-2 – February 2003 (Geneva)

the Resumed Prepcom-3a as a registered civil society delegate. He also attended the actual Summit from December 7–14 with a team of four doctoral and graduate student researchers. As delegates, researchers were allowed access to all of the official documents of Prepcom-3, Prepcom-3a, and the Summit, as well as all of the documents made available to delegates by other delegates and interested parties. Many of these documents were collected and added to an *N6* database created for the project.<sup>7</sup> *N6* was used for review, coding, and qualitative analysis of the documents. Most important among these documents were the initial and subsequent drafts of the WSIS Declaration of Principles, WSIS Plan of Action, and WSIS Rules and Procedures.

In addition, the entire public e-mail archive of the civil society public plenary (5 MB) and bureau (1 MB), as well as numerous public documents, were added to the *N6* database for qualitative analysis. The database covers a 10-month period from March 13, 2003 through December 13, 2003, and at this point only focuses on content in English. The initial cleaning (removal of images and file transfer encoding) and organization of the data yielded 38 text files, 148 free nodes, and 116 tree nodes.<sup>8</sup> Appendix A presents the initial axial coding schema used in the content analysis. Table 1 illustrates the data on which the content analysis was performed. In the presentation of data from these public archives, all identifying information has been removed

(although active participants in these processes may certainly recognize themselves).

## Results

### *WSIS Civil Society and the Use of Computer-Mediated Communication*

The first research question in this study asks, “Did the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communication to organize their work and participate in the WSIS?” We begin to answer this question by analyzing overall civil society participation in the WSIS processes, relative to governments and private-sector actors.

#### *Characteristics of WSIS Civil Society*

While by no means representative of any “global civil society,” there has been a large and diverse participation from the international civil society sector at each stage of the various WSIS preparatory processes. As illustrated in Table 2, delegates representing civil society consistently outnumbered those delegates from the private sector, and were surpassed in absolute numbers only by the government representatives. Based on the subsample of civil society delegates from the survey ( $n = 74$ , 28%), we learn more about the characteristics of the members of the WSIS civil society (which was also supported by participant observation).

The majority of civil society delegates were male ( $n = 45$ , 64%). The modal education level was a master’s degree, with a slight majority ( $n = 36$ ,

7. *N6* is a commercial software package that allows for in-depth qualitative analysis of text-based documents, with extensive referencing features to non-textual material. It allows for in-vivo coding, with tree (axial) or open coding schemas, as well as extensive filtering, searching, and comparisons across the data.

8. A notation was made each time a file transfer encoding was deleted, which was coded as “file transfer.” This code provides an indication of the frequency with which the CS members use the e-mail list to deliver files and documents.

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Table 2. *Civil Society Participation in WSIS Preparatory Committee Events Other Sectors*

Name	City	Length	Participation by Sector		
			Government	Civil society	Business
Prepcom-1	Geneva	5	607	233	34
Prepcom-2	Geneva	10	901	394	60
Prepcom-3	Geneva	10	878	537	68
WSIS	Geneva	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

52%) reporting to be of either low or middle income in their own countries. Western Europe represented the largest geographic region within the study sample ( $n = 23$ , 32%), followed by Africa ( $n = 19$ , 27%). Most of the respondents ( $n = 41$ , 58%) did not speak English as their primary language. Most were directors or managers within their organization and “education and academia” was the most frequently cited organizational theme.

*Conflicts and Tensions Within WSIS Civil Society*  
Some of the strongest conflicts in the WSIS civil society come from within its own organizational structures. These tensions emerged out of questions of legitimacy. Much of the complex WSIS civil society structure has *evolved organically* from the earliest Prepcom meetings. These structures include multiple self-constituting caucuses and other moving parts. For example, there are distributed working groups on Content & Themes (C&T), a Civil Society Plenary (CSP), 19 Thematic Caucuses & Working Groups, and various ad hoc drafting committees. Very few formal decision-making procedures exist within the sector, and nearly all decisions are made by consensus and/or acquiescence. There is a broad diversity of interests represented by the international civil society sector involved in WSIS, including: education, academia, and research; science and technology; media; creators and promoters of culture; cities and local authorities; trade unions; NGOs; youth; gender; volunteers; indigenous people; networks and coalitions; multistakeholder partnerships; philanthropic institutions; think tanks; and people with disabilities. This diversity matters to the development of an Information Society, but is also one source of weakness and tension within the WSIS civil society, as groups work to ensure that the ideological issues that hold them together are adequately represented by statements emanating in the name of WSIS civil

society. Also, as we are reminded by Keck & Sikkink (1998):

This is not to suggest that advocacy networks are egalitarian structures. We recognize the asymmetrical or lopsided nature of most network interactions. Power is exercised within networks, and power often follows from resources, of which a preponderance exists within northern network nodes. Stronger actors in the network do often drown out the weaker ones, because of the nature of the network form of organization, many actors (including powerful northern ones) are transformed through their participation in the network. (p. 207)

These resource and power dynamics certainly exist within the WSIS civil society, even within the most “open and transparent” part of the structure, the Plenary. The resources that feed these power dynamics are primarily *technology resources*—who has access to the “official” Web sites and mailing lists, and who can add or create caucuses and working groups (by virtue of giving them space on the “official” Web sites and mailing lists)—and *geographical resources* who are located in Geneva, Paris, or New York, and physically attend the formal and informal meetings quickly, easily, and frequently.

While much of the structure evolved organically, gaining its legitimacy from its openness, transparency, and attempts to involve literally anybody meeting their self-mandated description of civil society and having an e-mail address, a second more “authoritative” structure was imposed onto civil society by the governments and conference organizers.

During Prepcom-2, the CSP authorized the creation of a Civil Society Bureau (CSB), comprising 20 representatives from diverse civil society “families,” with the stated function of “facilitating and engaging as much as possible the contribution of the civil society and the elaboration of a common and

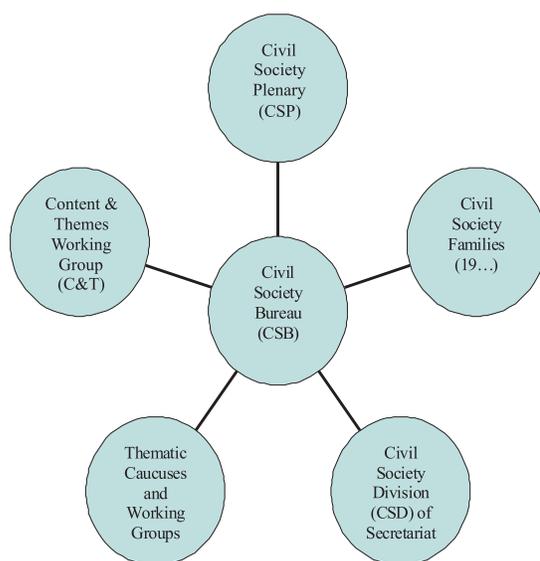


Figure 1. Non-Hierarchical Representation of WSIS Civil Society Structure.

shared vision of the Information Society" (CSB, 2003). While there is evidence to indicate the CSP did indeed authorize the CSB, it was suggested and comprised primarily by the Government Bureau and the Summit organizers. Figure 1 illustrates the overall structure and anarchic nature of the civil society sector.

#### *Controversial Nature of the CSB*

Within the various structures of civil society, the CSB is perhaps the most controversial. The controversy is based primarily on the top-down way in which the CSB was constituted and implemented, as well as the ongoing concern that it lacks transparency and legitimacy. Many active participants within the civil society sector feel as if the conference organizers imposed the CSB as a way to limit the effectiveness of the organic, bottom-up organizational processes that emerged after the earliest Prepcoms. These concerns are amplified when the Bureau is allowed to make decisions about tangible resources, such as allocating office space, determining fellowships for Prepcom events, and allocating entry badges—overpasses—into the WSIS plenary sessions. Based on

our content analysis of the civil society plenary e-mail archive, we found numerous examples of members expressing high levels of frustration with the CSB. For example, observe the following statement highlighting the abysmal communication practices of the CSB and how it was initially constituted.<sup>9</sup>

Let me only add that the civil society bureau has been highly controversial since its proposal at Prepcom2. Apparently, this situation is not improving, specially since some of the CSB members seem to speak for themselves, without any mandate . . . Although there were disagreement on this constitution for the reason stated above, the two only volunteers were "appointed" . . . Since then, I've seen neither any report nor any request for comments or proposal on any issue raised in the CSB. . . . If it was not thanks to \_\_\_ forwarding some important messages to the plenary, or through \_\_\_ sending some messages addressed by the CSD to the CSB, I would never hear of what's being discussed - and, who knows?, decided - in the CSB.

I don't know of other "families". But this absence of legitimacy and representativity, as well as this opacity, speak for themselves. The civil society plenary, which does exist simply because we have commonly created it following consensus and because we are using it, remains the most legitimate instance.

The CSB was set up primarily as an interface with the WSIS secretariat and the corresponding entity for governments called the Government Bureau. However, what became clear is that the CSB engaged in what some organizational theory scholars call "mission creep," and was trying to move further into work on substantive matters of ICT policy. Clarification on these issues was finally provided with the following rationale from a CSB member.

In the recent Paris meeting, nobody in the CS-B questioned the fact that the CS-B is NOT responsible for content related issues. If content related issues pop up in the CS-B, the CS-B should transfer this issue to the CS-CTG or the relevant caucuses, themes groups etc. The so-called "families" of the CS-B are representig groups of networks and

9. Note: These e-mail excerpts are presented in their original form and set in block quotations within the text. The only exception is the removal of names, organizations, and other readily identifiable information. As such, all grammatical and spelling errors are from the original and I have chosen not to mark each error with the standard [sic]. These errors are mostly due to a wide diversity of native language speakers, all trying to communicate using English as a common written language.

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coordinate the activities of these networks formally. They are NOT content groups, although there is some overlapping (take the “media family” and the “media themes group” as an example. But note also that there is an “CS Internet Governance Caucus” but no “Internet Governance Family”). In the family, the organisations, which are linked to them, keep their own position and have no obligation, to take a common position on an issue (like in the “Trade Union” family, where you can have a unique position on procedural question, but divergent voices on content themes, which is both natural and does not create any problems, because the CS-B is responsible for procedural questions only. To make it short: A family is NOT a CS negotiating body, the CS negotiating bodies are the content and themes groups and caucuses.

This e-mail, along with others in the archive, and participant observation indicate that the component of the CS structures that appears to have the highest degree of structural power is the Content & Themes Working Group (C&T). From the preceding note, we see a frequently occurring posture within the WSIS civil society that the “bureau doesn’t do content”—it is only an administrative body. Any “content related issues” that emerge within the CSB are supposed to be relegated to the C&T Working Group. Of course, in an international ICT policy conference that is working to forge a global consensus on the principles, values, norms, and rules for the global governance of information infrastructure and the Information Society, content is of primary importance.

### *Tensions Between CSB and CSP*

From within the civil society sector itself, C&T is seen as “the main body created by the Civil Society Plenary (CSP) of WSIS at the first Prepcom to bring together the content proposals of civil society organizations participating in the WSIS process” (Ó Siochrú, Kleinwaechter, & Bloem, 2003). Following C&T as the second most powerful component in the structure, but in some delegates’ minds having the

most “legitimacy,” is the CSP. The CSP, which is defined as anyone who is signed onto the Plenary e-mail list, tried to be the most open and broad-based component of the WSIS CS.

Contrary to this perspective, some delegates have argued that a WSIS civil society “plenary” does not and could not exist within the WSIS structures, as does one CSB member here.

There does not exist a forum at the WSIS referred to as “Civil Society Plenary,” nor was there ever one at any other U.N. sponsored Summit in the past. A “Plenary” signifies a fixed group of members or member states and the actual official definition is: 1. Complete in all respects, unlimited or full: a diplomat with plenary powers, 2. Fully attended by all qualified members: a plenary session of the council. As you can see, Civil Society does not fulfill this definition or its prerequisites. In Paris, we had three (3) mechanisms . . .

Nonetheless, the transnational civil society used these various structures to organize its work and to engage with the WSIS policy processes. They were able to produce five significant policy documents and statements, most in three languages (English, Spanish, and French), and to post them on the Web in rich-text, pdf, text, and html formats.

### *Current WSIS Civil Society CMC Practices*

The primary focus of this research question is: “Did the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communication to organize their work and participate in the WSIS?” We find that the greatest communication within the WSIS civil society sector takes place using e-mail lists, with nearly all of the civil society respondents to our international survey ( $n = 47$ , 89%) reporting that they have communicated with colleagues in the sector “frequently” or “very frequently” using e-mail lists over the past 6 months.<sup>10</sup> More advanced communication tools are used infrequently, such as blogs ( $n = 43$ , 90%) either “not at all” or “very infrequently,” or wiki webs ( $n = 44$ , 96%) being used even less frequently.

10. As suggested by an anonymous reviewer, I remind the reader that even with the data triangulation applied in the mixed-method approach to this study, there are significant limitations to our current analysis. There is the potential bias of a “self-selected group” from a “self-selected group” being the most frequent persons posting on the list. In fact, this is most likely the case. At present, the N6 database has not been coded sufficiently to produce an analysis at the level of detail to provide definitive answers to these questions. However, anecdotally, from reading and analyzing the postings and participating in both the plenary meetings and mailing lists, there is a fairly broad geographic representation of the e-mail posters; however, there is still the self-selected bias to which I refer later, of those persons posting who seem to have more time to compose and post messages.

The organization of these civil society structures began with support for their distributed work via CMC tools starting after the Prepcom-2 in February 2003. The first plenary mail list was set up in March, with only one “test” message being transmitted (248 bytes). In April, the traffic picked up slightly (10 KB), with almost immediate calls by some within the sector to use Web-based tools to facilitate their geographically distributed work, such as editing, voting, and other aspects of developing proposals and policy papers. For example, this excerpt taken from only the third e-mail posted to the newly established e-mail list for the civil society plenary calls for volunteers to provide collaboration tools.

We need volunteers to help facilitate the technical aspects of this proposal. We are trying to identify a Web-based tool that will assist us in this process (ed. group editing, voting, etc.). We have collected a list of candidate systems. We need volunteers who have Linux system administration experience and also people or organizations who could possibly host a system on their server.

Subsequently, when talking about proposed working practices it was publicized that the civil society hoped to have available an “online collaborative editing tool.”

As the CSP prepared for the Paris Intersessional Meeting July 15–18, 2003, new calls were made for face-to-face assistance, for individuals to act as the “eyes and ears” at the Intersessional meeting for the rest of the CSP. One plenary member volunteered for and called for assistance to coordinate an “NGO Monitoring Group” for the Intersessional meeting, reporting back to the entire Plenary the work of the meeting. In stating the importance of this function, this CSP member said:

I believe this reporting is a critical function for us to play, since I am sure some governments are counting on the fact that much fewer NGOs will be able to attend the intersessional in such an expensive city during the height of the tourist season. The only way all our voices can be heard is if groups around the world know what is going on in a timely manner.

While the complexity and diversity of the civil society structures reflect the diversity and nature of civil society itself, organizing the sector for effective participation in an equally complicated global ICT policy process like WSIS becomes particularly difficult. This

difficulty is compounded by the more limited financial resources available to civil society delegates, relative to other sectors such as global and multinational corporations organized as the Coordination Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) and coordinated by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

#### *Dilemma of Existing WSIS Civil Society Structures*

The WSIS Civil Society sector has worked diligently to encourage civil society organizations from around the world to participate actively in its processes; however, there is still concern that the variety of civil society organizations around the world is not represented adequately within the existing civil society structures. This presents the WSIS civil society with a difficult dilemma. On one horn of the dilemma, there are no global structures in place to elect and represent the vast diversity of civil society interests at the international level. This is true even for the business sector (although big business organizations such as the ICC and the CCBI are well organized and effective at the international level, these organizations are not necessarily representative of the diversity of private-sector views, such as small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises). Nevertheless, the private-sector actors have more homogeneity than does civil society; private-sector actors have long-established organizational structures through which to work out their differences. They also have greater fiscal and institutional resources with which to address the problem. Civil society organizations will never be able to get sufficient resources to ensure that all the civil society interests around the world are adequately represented. Further, they lack the organizational structures that would allow them to make decisions about these difficult questions and to develop sufficient solutions. At present, civil society is forced to rely on those well-resourced members of the sector that physically attend all of the preparatory meetings, and hope that the well-resourced adequately represent the less-well-resourced interests.

On the other horn of the dilemma, if the WSIS civil society does rely on those well-resourced members actually present at the meetings to “represent” them and to interpret for them, this leaves the civil society sector vulnerable to the dominant interpretations of a few, self-selected elite individuals. As it is, many of these elite individuals with the resources to

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participate in these meetings operate in a cliquish nature that makes it difficult for newcomers to engage. For example, one CSP member from France argued as much in the following e-mail excerpt.

Thank you for your warm wishes ; I send attached to this e-mail the text of my presentation at the SC-2 plenary on thursday in both english and french. I take the opportunity to stress once more that themes such as these dealt with in my presentation are completely "off the agenda" in the SC meetings and at least not considered as priorities in our debates. . . . When at last does the "civil society" dare tackle this issue of paramount importance ? . . . *At some extent I've got the feeling through the different Prepcoms and meetings that there are mainly Internet lobbyists or instigators and a new breed of "media representatives" in our plenary occupying the floor.* [emphasis added]

### *Recognizing the Potential of CMC Tools for WSIS Civil Society*

Many of these apparent liabilities can perhaps be turned into assets through the more extensive use of computer-mediated communication and collaboration tools and practices. Following the Paris Intersessional meeting, additional information was produced regarding the need for civil society to collaborate more effectively, and to mind the needs geographically distributed knowledge work. The discussions on the list then turned to strategy. One CSP member produced and circulated a detailed document to the sector urging them to consider the importance of remote participation:

We should always have in mind the people who are not able to come to Geneva. They depend on us for the latest infos on what is going on, and we depend on (some of) them for their input and ideas in our lobbying work. The "info security" caucus for example consisted at least of two persons not present in Geneva and Paris, but who were actively involved. This principle also should help us think of all the interested people in Geneva who do not belong to the "inner circle" (whatever this is).

This delegate produced a recommendation as to the structure of civil society that would lead to maximization of its collective resources, arguing even more forcefully for the use of CMC and collaboration tools.

. . . live-feed of the monitors in the plenary sessions to IRC or elsewhere, with the possibility for real-time comments and analysis via the internet (I imagine something like this : "ONLINE CS PARTICIPANT FROM KOREA: last comment from delegation XYZ is dangerous. It would imply ABC, and they have already tried this at the asian regional conf.")

- have a screen, in a room for CS, which broadcasts comments which could include extracts from email messages, realtime chats, etc.
- have a videofeed from the sessions broadcast over the internet

### *Evaluation of WSIS Civil Society Use of CMC*

The second research question for this study asks, "How did the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communications? What *barriers* did these civil society groupings face, and how did they *overcome* these barriers?" As we have shown above, the organizational structure of the WSIS civil society sector is highly complex and geographically distributed across multiple countries, multiple organizations, multiple subunits of caucuses, task forces, families, content and themes, plenary, and bureau. Working in a complex, geographically distributed environment such as this one poses numerous challenges (Olson & Olson, 2000). Some of these challenges include building trust and common ground (Rocco, 1998), coordinating the activities and communications of distributed teams (Kiesler et al., 1984), and discussion control (Kraut et al., 1982). With the inclusion of participants from both developed and developing countries, as is the case in the WSIS civil society, these problems are further complicated, including managing interinstitutional and cross-national cultural differences (McCroskey, 1990) and differential experience with CMC tools (Gersick, 1988).

### *Understanding the Dimensions of Collaboration Readiness*

In much of the scholarly work done on the use of CMC tools to support geographically distributed collaboration in science, one institutional form that has received significant attention is the "collaboratory" (Wulf, 1989). Studies of collaboratories have shown that one of the most important indicators of potential success of geographically distributed collaboration within a collaboratory is a concept known as "collaboration readiness" (Olson & Olson, 2000;

Olson, Finholt & Teasley, 2000; Olson, Teasley, Bietz, & Cogburn, 2003).

As its name suggests, collaboration readiness attempts to measure the degree to which a geographically distributed group has the socio-technical foundation to support the introduction and use of more advanced CMC and collaboration tools. In the literature, the concept of collaboration readiness has three important dimensions, articulated here as: (1) collaboration *orientation* readiness, (2) collaboration *infrastructure* readiness, and (3) collaboration *technology* readiness. We will use this framework to analyze the degree to which the WSIS civil society has used CMC tools that may predict their success at instituting the more advanced collaboration tools that the findings in the previous section suggest are necessary.

#### *Collaboration Orientation Readiness*

Evidence of collaboration *orientation* readiness can be found in the friendliness and openness of communication within the distributed community: a willingness to share ideas and information, and to support members of the community. Given that the WSIS civil society "community" exists primarily through its e-mail lists and Web sites (and only on occasion during its face-to-face meetings, which we also observed), analyzing those e-mail communications for evidence of this "collaboration orientation" provides a useful, although limited, measure of the willingness of the WSIS civil society to collaborate.

For example, in the e-mail traffic leading up to one of the first important face-to-face meetings, the Paris Intersessional meeting on Content & Themes, one CSP member commented about how expensive Paris was, another member responded with the following humorous and encouraging message:

Just one point I don't agree with you : Paris is'nt such an expensive city ! It's (far) less expensive that Geneva and much more funny ! And you can really enjoy this fun because – unlike in Geneva – it's affordable. So please don't worry " you'll be fairly well there. At least I hope so.

Another humorous aspect of the level of collaboration *orientation* readiness within the WSIS civil society can be found in an exchange from a person wanting to have his name and organization added to one of the civil society family mailing lists.

Hi All, talking about Caucuses and Families. . .  
Whom can I direct myself to if the head of the

media-'family' (Mr. \_\_\_\_\_) doesn't answer my e-mails in which I ask him to include me in this family? Does anybody know about a 'supreme family court' or something like that? Thanks for orientation!

Shortly thereafter, the person responsible for the family in question responded with another humorous e-mail continuing the legal metaphors, as this excerpt indicates:

Dear Plaintiff (\_\_\_\_\_)—  
Sorry I haven't answered you. I had a very serious operation at the start of April, and, as soon I was able, I had to go on three out-of-town trips in succession.  
There is nothing magical or mysterious about joining the media family. When we meet during the intersession in Paris or at Prepcom 3 in Geneva, the meeting times and places will be posted, and you should show up if you are in town. . . .  
I hope this satisfies any desire you may have for litigation.  
Best regards,

This is the kind of communication pattern that illustrates a high level of collaboration *orientation* readiness. While we are only presenting here a sample of this type of communication, there are numerous examples within the database.

While our assessment is that there is a high level of collaboration *orientation* readiness, exhibited by cheerful communication, transparency, and openness, the sector is not without its problems. At one point in June, in the middle of a particularly chatty thread discussing the various lists that were being created to facilitate cooperation, one CSP member sent the following e-mail, all in capital letters, and then deliberately signing their name in lower case letters.

CAN ANYONE TELL ME WHAT THIS FORUM IS ALL ABOUT. YOU CAN'T REALLY BE SENDING US E-MAILS TALKING ABOUT THIS OR THAT LIST WHEN CLEARLY THAT COULD BE DONE PRIVATELY. IF THIS FORUM WAS CREATED FOR THIS KIND OF COMMUNICATION THEN PLEASE TAKE US OFF.  
name

Another participant who agreed, in principle, with the sentiment of the initial post, but in turn did not appreciate the format of the complaining message followed this up quickly with the following message:

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Dear all, I agree with \_\_\_\_ that sometimes it can be unnerving to get a mail that could have better been sent privately on this list. It is equally so when I get mails in uppercase.

### *No offense intended*

In the world of e-mail “netiquette,” sending a message in all capital letters is considered shouting. The hostility was diffused expertly and a potential “flame war” averted by one of the list moderators who answered by saying:

hi \_\_\_\_, It's a good point. Some of these communications don't need to be on the list. On announcement with a request to send information to a private email address should suffice. At the moment, we are simply trying to bring together as much information as we can, about existing WSIS caucuses (regional and thematic) and their work spaces . . . and to make that information available via a central point. . . .

As the policy processes unfolded, CSP members began to use their e-mail list to coordinate their work more effectively. For example, when debates emerged regarding the draft civil society input into the Paris Intersessional meeting, one CSP member asserted: “What do you mean by this statement: ‘We cannot, of course, expect a consensus document to be perfect for everyone; that is part of the compromise that consensus implies.’” The original author again averted conflict by responding courteously: “Simply that every organization will still find something they would have liked included or improved.”

Finally, one last aspect of the high level of collaboration *orientation* readiness is found in the levels of trust within the civil society sector. In our international survey, we measured a general level of trust, as well as two different and well-known dimensions of trust, *cognitive* trust and *affective* trust. High levels of trust are seen as one of the most important predictors of the success of geographically distributed collaboration and are, unfortunately, one of the most difficult characteristics to build. All three of these measures of trust have been used to assess the level of collaboration readiness of global virtual teams and participants in other types of geographically distributed knowledge-oriented work from science to industry.

In analyzing the results from this survey, we find that there is a high degree of general trust among members of the WSIS civil society, both in general

and among the members of civil society. On a binary measure of trust (i.e., “most people can be trusted;” “most people cannot be trusted”), a vast majority of civil society ( $n = 66$ , 93%) reported high levels of general trust. When we look specifically at two important dimensions of trust—*affective* and *cognitive* trust—we also find high levels. For example, a majority of civil society respondents (64%) either “agree” or “strongly agree” with an index of items measuring cognitive trust within the sector (e.g., members “are reliable and will not make my job more difficult by careless work,” rated on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being “strongly agree”). On an index of items measuring affective trust within the sector (e.g., “We have a sharing relationship; We can freely share our ideas, feelings, and hopes”), the majority of civil society respondents (65%) chose either “agree” or “strongly agree.”

These selected examples illustrate the high level of collaboration orientation readiness, and the possibility of building on this foundation to further develop the collaboration infrastructure and communication technologies within the civil society sector.

### *Collaboration Infrastructure Readiness*

Another component of the framework used to analyze the WSIS civil society use of computer-mediated communication is the concept of *collaboration infrastructure readiness*. This aspect is measured by looking for the existence of an organizational and structural infrastructure to support geographically distributed collaboration. We will continue to present evidence of the level of collaboration infrastructure readiness of the WSIS civil society sector.

As mentioned above, although far from perfect, the WSIS civil society has numerous organizational structures within which to organize its geographically distributed work. Following Prepcom-2, several electronic working spaces were established for civil society. Some within civil society called this an “online reorganization” and saw it as part of the overall process of formalizing the structure of the Civil Society Plenary (CSP). This online reorganization included the creation of a CS domain, Web site, and mailing lists. Subsequently, the Content & Themes group set up an online collaboration space called BSCW (Basic Support for Collaborative Work) to help coordinate the drafting of documents by a wide range of geographically distributed participants.

Another illustration of *collaboration infrastructure readiness* within civil society, is the way in which members of one structure work to keep members of other parts of the structure informed, especially the CSP. This principle of “transparency and openness” is embedded within the ethos of the WSIS civil society—although not always practiced.

For example, the following e-mail exchange shows how several of the CSB members made a concerted attempt to use the e-mail lists to keep the rest of the plenary informed of what the Bureau was doing. By the middle of July, after the Paris Inter-Sessional meeting, over 240 persons around the world were members of the Civil Society Plenary list. For example, one CSB member posted an early message in May, saying:

This is just to keep you up to date on some Bureau activities. At the bottom is a note sent from the CSD [Civil Society Division of the WSIS Secretariat] to Bureau Members, which has some useful information about the process.

Notes of this sort help to bridge the information asymmetry between “Bureau” members and the rest of the Plenary. They also help build trust among the civil society sector as a whole, and toward specific civil society members (such as those frequently posting these messages and thus “exhibiting” the principles of transparency).

#### *Collaboration Technology Readiness*

Finally, the last component of the framework used to analyze the WSIS civil society use of CMC tools is the concept of *collaboration technology readiness*. This component of the framework looks for evidence of civil society members actually using collaboration technology as they conduct their geographically distributed knowledge work. On this aspect of the analysis, the findings are mixed. While there are examples of the use of some more advanced CMC tools such as wikis, document repositories, and instant messaging, these attempts met with limited success. From our survey, we know that the majority of communication within the WSIS civil society sector takes place using e-mail lists, with nearly all of the civil society respondents ( $n = 47$ , 89%) reporting that they have communicated with colleagues in the sector “frequently” or “very frequently” using e-mail lists over the past 6 months. The more advanced CMC tools envisioned by this analytical category are used less infrequently within

the WSIS civil society. For example, the majority of civil society respondents ( $n = 43$ , 90%) have used blogs “not at all” or “very infrequently.” Similarly, nearly all of civil society respondents ( $n = 44$ , 96%) reported using wikis either “not at all” or “very infrequently.”

However, with that said, some members of the WSIS civil society use collaboration technology to engage in their distributed collaboration. For example, in addition to the multiple e-mail lists, they set up a Web-based portal as a document repository to help them develop multiple documents for use during the WSIS Prepcom process. The following e-mail excerpt illustrates the introduction of these new collaboration technologies.

1) Content & Themes Drafting Portal  
(\*\*\*New\*\*\*): The Content & Themes group is now making use of a Web portal called BSCW for posting contributions, drafts, and released documents. It allows the public to submit comments on content that is posted in the portal.

This BSCW Web portal was used as a document repository from May through June of 2003 to assist the Content & Themes working groups in their document drafting. Figure 2 is a screenshot illustrating the use of this document repository.

Yet another example of the use of the *collaboration technology readiness* of civil society is the use of an IRC (Internet Relay Chat) channel for WSIS established by one CSP member who announced it to the Plenary in the following e-mail excerpt:

Just a quick note to let you all know that I have setup a WSIS IRC chat channel. with it, we'll be able to chat in realtime both before, during and after the upcoming Prepcom. the details are as follows . . .

Later, another participant set up a Web log to talk about Content & Themes issues:

I just set up a blog we can use to inform the CT Group about the advancement of the sub committee 2 sessions. To read, please go to [wsis-cs.blogspot.com](http://wsis-cs.blogspot.com) To contribute, please send me your name and your email address. I will send you all the instructions.

Unfortunately, although both of these collaboration technologies—one synchronous (IRC) and the other asynchronous (BSCW)—were established and advertised within the civil society plenary, they

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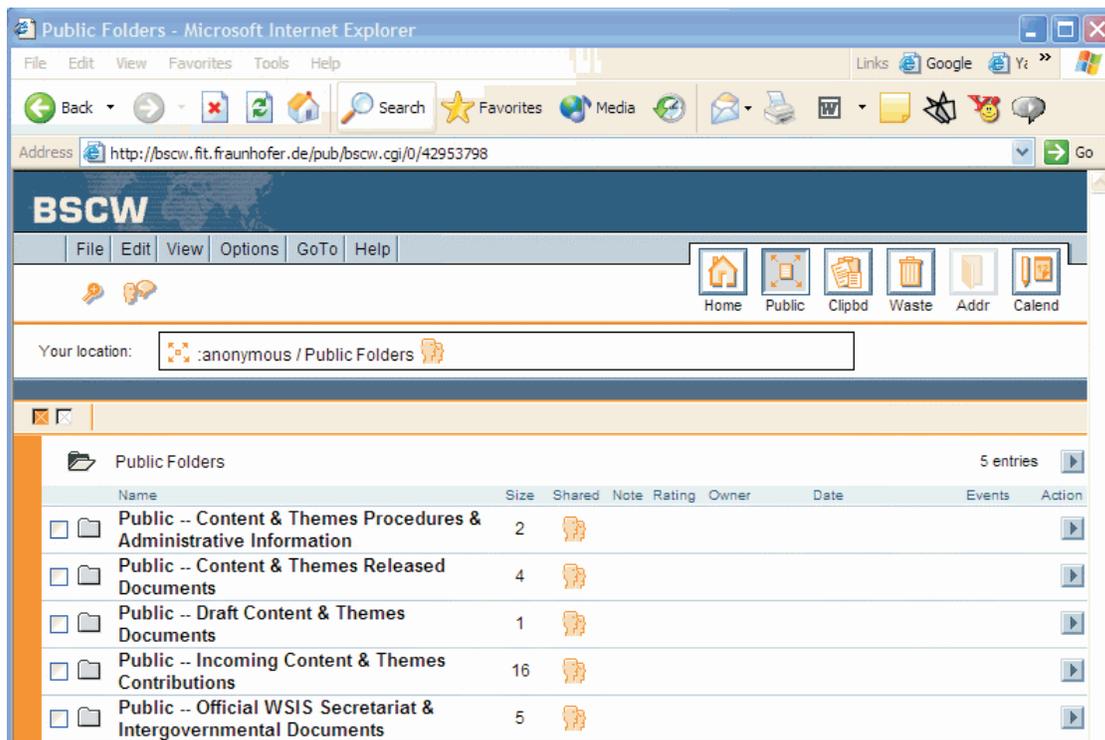


Figure 2. Screenshot of Web-based Digital Repository Used by Civil Society.

received little overall use within the community. These early efforts to introduce more advanced collaboration technologies were followed up on several occasions by other—and different—civil society members, mostly with the same result. I should note that none of these attempts to introduce more advanced collaboration technologies came from the organization that provides the primary e-mail list and Web site support. One might wonder what would have happened had this powerful organization been the one to introduce these new collaboration technologies. One might also wonder why they have not attempted to do so.

However, on a brighter note, other—simpler, but broadcast only—synchronous technologies were used by the conference organizers themselves. During Prepcorn-3 in Geneva, the International Telecommunications Union organized live video streaming from the conference center. There was evidence that a number of civil society members were logged on and watching the proceedings from locations around the world. When this video streaming was coupled with the up-to-date reporting by civil society members on the ground, it helped to involve

participants more actively in the process as the following two e-mail posts illustrate.

And yes, I am checking this webcast from my Tokyo home with cable broadband connection, and at least the audio is very clear. They don't show the speakers from the clear. And no translation is hard for non-English speeches to understand. I feel not too remote . . . but missing all the great friends to mingle. Now they finished para 40, right?"

This note was followed quickly by one from another remote participant saying,

Across the sea here, in a very different time zone, Vancouver, BC is also following the sessions - thank you virtual global community for this opportunity!

Based on this mixed evidence, we still conclude that the WSIS civil society has a high level of overall collaboration readiness, but there are substantial power dynamics at play within the community that make it difficult to introduce innovative, more advanced collaboration technologies.

Table 3. Overview of Civil Society Structures

Structure	Components
Civil Society Plenary	CSP is open to everyone and is the main body of civil society for discussion and general decision making.
Civil Society Bureau	CCSB functions as an interlinkage between the CSCT and the intergovernmental Bureau for procedural and technical issues.
Content & Themes	CSCT coordinates the work of the numerous regional and thematic caucuses and working groups. It is the main body for discussion and decisions on content-related issues.
Civil Society Families	CSF represents the various themes and interests of members on the Bureau, a total of 20 including regional representation.
Thematic Caucuses and Working Group	TCWG also represents the various thematic interests within the civil society, including cities and local authorities, community media caucus, cultural and linguistic diversity, e-government/e-democracy, education and academia caucus, education and academia LAC, environment and ICTs, human rights, indigenous peoples, global ICT governance, media, gender strategies, patents, copyrights and trademarks, persons with disabilities, privacy and security, scientific information, trade unions, values and ethics, volunteering and ICTs.

### **Civil Society, Global Policy Networks, and Epistemic Communities**

Previous research has shown that epistemic communities—or networks of knowledge-producing policy-actors—can work to promote the convergence of knowledge and interpretive schemas within public policy processes (Haas, 1980, 1990). While the earliest definition of an “epistemic community” comes from Foucault (1973), a more appropriate definition comes later from Haas et al. (1977). They argue that an epistemic community is “a network of individuals and groups who are able to influence the future by virtue of their shared specialized knowledge of certain crucial phenomena.” These epistemic communities “seek to use their knowledge as a way of organizing cognition collectively” (Haas et al., 1977, p. 38) and contribute to global governance through their direct and indirect influence of the dense transnational networks of policy makers and issue stakeholders. Some scholars call these dense networks “policy-actor networks” (Slaughter, 2001; Bockman & Eyal, 2002) and others call them “transnational advocacy networks” (Kirk and Sikkink, 1998; Betsill and Bulkeley, 2004). Regardless of name, these networks are a key source of integrating knowledge and bringing new ideas into the international decision-making process, and as a result, are a critical

variable in understanding regime formation and global governance for the Information Society.

Given the importance of epistemic communities in global policy processes and their potential linkages with transnational advocacy networks, the third research question for this study asks, “To what extent do these CMC practices reveal the existence of *policy networks* within the WSIS civil society and what is their relationship with *epistemic communities*?”

This research question has produced some of the most exciting findings. A majority of civil society delegates (66%,  $n = 31$ ) agree or strongly agree that they “work in concert with other experts in [their] field to disseminate [their] ideas to the global ICT policy community.” Interestingly, when given an explicit definition of a “global policy network” and then asked if they are involved in such a network, an even larger majority (77%,  $n = 39$ ) answered yes.<sup>11</sup> This finding is in line with the earlier work done by Kirk & Sikkink (1998) on transnational advocacy networks in environment and gender issues, and provides some of the first empirical evidence for the existence of transnational advocacy networks within the ICT policy domain. Since this study seems to confirm the existence of these transnational net-

11. This second question was asked as triangulation for the first question on policy networks. The explicit definition provided to respondents was as follows: “A ‘Global Policy Network’ can be defined as an international network of policy-actors that could consist of governmental and/or non-governmental actors. Frequently, the members of such a Global Policy Network will interact as delegates to international conferences where they attempt to work collectively to influence the outcome of the conference.”

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works, there is the possibility that these networks can be strengthened through strategic policy interventions which may include even more types of participants found in previous research, such as sympathetic government representatives, private sector, foundations, and international organization allies, and tie them even more tightly to epistemic communities and globally organized advocacy activities.

Even further in this regard, when asked about their impact on global ICT policy processes, a majority (67%,  $n = 28$ ) felt that their ideas have been either important or very important in influencing the perspectives of global ICT policy-actors and a large majority (79%,  $n = 26$ ) believe that their global policy network has helped them to influence global ICT policy processes. Finally, nearly all (84%,  $n = 26$ ) of the respondents that identified themselves with a global policy network believed that their network was “associated with a group of scholars, scientists, or other continuous source of knowledge and information,” meaning an epistemic community.

When asked whether they worked “to generate specialized knowledge on issues relevant to global ICT policy” within their organization, a large majority (83%) responded affirmatively. The most frequently cited (34%,  $n = 14$ ) method for disseminating their specialized knowledge to the global ICT policy community is through “public presentations (e.g., conferences).” Most civil society delegates (89%,  $n = 39$ ) rely on other civil society organizations for the knowledge and information necessary to prepare for global ICT policy conferences, as opposed to government, private sector, or international organization resources. However, a minority of respondents (47%,  $n = 22$ ) agree or strongly agree that they “have sufficient knowledge and information to be effective in global ICT policy processes.” These issues will be explored more fully in future research.

### **“Success” of Civil Society in the Summit**

The fourth research question asks, “What was the effect of the WSIS civil society’s use of computer-mediated communication?” One of the most important measures of “success” in a United Nations summit is the degree to which delegations are able to get specific language into the conference documents (Schechter, 2001). When exploring the success and satisfaction of civil society in the WSIS

policy formulation processes, we have chosen two measures. The first is a subjective measure of the perceived efficacy of one’s organization in influencing the WSIS documents. The second is also a subjective measure of the perceived success of one’s organization at getting specific language into the WSIS documents.

Interestingly, a slim majority of civil society organizations (54%,  $n = 38$ ) felt either successful or very successful at getting specific language into the WSIS policy formulation process. However, when asked about their specific impact on the two major WSIS documents, a minority (26%,  $n = 11$ ) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they had a “significant impact on the WSIS Declaration of Principles, and an even smaller number (19%,  $n = 8$ ) felt that they had a significant impact on the WSIS Action Plan.

From the perspective of civil society, the key policy issues to be included in the *WSIS Declaration of Principles* are encapsulated by an overarching focus on using the GII to create a more people-oriented Information Society. As an example of the pursuit of policy alternatives within the civil society sector, one plenary member sent the following e-mail to the plenary list:

Alternatives to the World Summit on the Information Society ‘A discussion list for people planning alternatives to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) including another summit, countersummit, walkout, protest, or other strategies to advance communication as a human right and as a public good. To counter corporate hijacking of the WSIS for private interest or Bushwacking of the WSIS in the name of a ‘war on cyberterrorism.’

Table 4 presents an overview of the key policy issues of the civil society sector. Most of these issues became the centerpiece of the civil society inputs into WSIS process, and were the focal point for civil society discontent with the draft *WSIS Declaration of Principles* and the *WSIS Action Plan* (Global Contract Foundation, 2003). This led the civil society to release an alternative document at WSIS called the *WSIS Civil Society Benchmark*.

## Summary of Findings

Before we move on to our discussion and implications, I briefly summarize the findings of the study. In this study, we asked four research questions.

Table 4. Primary Policy Issues of Concern to Civil Society

Broad Issue	Specific	Implications
Global governance	Usually refers to Internet governance, specifically ICANN, WIPO	Hotly contested issue, ranging from focus on removing Root from U.S. control to democratizing ICANN (with more influence for governments) to establishing a new IGO for Internet governance
Open access to knowledge	Global knowledge commons, pen journals, and open archives initiatives	
Human rights	UDHR in principle and action and enforcement	
Relaxed property rights	Free/Libre Open-Source Software (FOSS)	Traditional IPR seen as the industrial control of information
Cultural and linguistic diversity in content		
"Right to communicate"	Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign; NWICO-oriented	Impact of ICTs on human rights, would be seen as creating a new human right
Education (distance learning and open knowledge)	NRENS is backbone for dissemination of knowledge	
Health		
Local initiatives	Respect for the primacy of local initiatives	
Cybersecurity	Privacy and information security	
Cybercrime		
Accessibility and disabilities		
Gender	Gender equality and nondiscrimination	
Sustainable democratic development		
Work/employment	Creating genuine sustainable employment and work	
Access to information infrastructure	Some opposition to using GII and "Digital Solidarity" the former as U.S.-centric and the latter as neocolonialist	Would create a new funding instrument (opposed by Germany)
Youth	Empowering youth	

The first research question asks, "Did the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communication to organize their work and participate in the WSIS?" What we find is that e-mail is the most widely used CMC within the WSIS civil society, with more complex asynchronous tools such as document repositories, wikis, and blogs, and synchronous tools such as Web conferencing, not being used. The most widely used technologies within the sector are maintained by one or only a few organizations. These few organizations, and a limited number of others in the inner circle, most of which are based in Geneva, Paris, or New York—in proximity to the face-to-face WSIS meetings, wield

the technology and geographic resources for leadership within the sector.

The second research question asks, "How did the civil society groupings involved in WSIS use computer-mediated communications? What *barriers* did these civil society groupings face, and how did they *overcome* those barriers?" Here, we find that civil society has a high level of what scholars of computer-mediated cooperative work (CMCW) call collaboration readiness. This concept of collaboration readiness, with its three distinct dimensions of collaboration *orientation* readiness, collaboration *infrastructure* readiness, and collaboration *technology* readiness, helps us to understand how likely civil

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society organizations are to be successful in their ongoing and highly complicated, geographically distributed collaborations. Based on our analyses, civil society organizations, with a few caveats, should be well positioned to continue and to expand their use of CMC tools into more advanced techniques to support their geographically distributed collaboration. However, the caveats are important ones. The inability of civil society to accept and diffuse technology support that does not come from one of the inner cliques of organizations limits their overall possibilities to the technological capabilities of those organizations. Further, the overzealous refusal on the part of many within civil society to not use any technology that is not open source may also limit their possibilities. The high levels of trust and relationship-focused leadership styles may help to insulate civil society from the limitations it faces in other areas.

The third question asks, "To what extent do these CMC practices reveal the existence of *policy networks* within the WSIS civil society and what is their relationship with *epistemic communities*?" Here we present some of the more exciting findings of the study. We find that a significant majority of civil society participants do see themselves as members of global policy networks. To our knowledge, this is some of the earliest empirical evidence for the existence of transnational advocacy networks in the global ICT policy arena. Members of these policy networks also appear to have significant linkages with knowledge-producing epistemic communities. This combination should assist the global community in facilitating the knowledge exchange and human capacity development required to strengthen the effectiveness of developing countries and civil society organizations within these emergent regime formation processes.

Finally, the fourth research question asks, "What was the *effect* of the WSIS civil society's use of computer-mediated communication?" Here we find that while civil society members have been active participants in nearly all aspects of the WSIS policy formulation processes including preparatory stages and the Summit itself, they have been fairly ineffective at influencing the process. This finding is certainly in line with those of previous studies of developing country and civil society involvement in global policy formulation processes.

## Discussion

To build a truly equitable global Information Society and to harness the potential of information and communication technologies for socio-economic development, the active participation of a diverse transnational civil society is critical, even if mainly through computer-mediated communication. In the multistakeholder processes of the World Summit on the Information Society, the transnational civil society sector plays a critically important role, representing much of the energy and applied innovation of the global Information Society. The active and theoretically co-equal involvement of the international civil society in these global governance processes is a major step forward. Their involvement is an explicit recognition, at least on the part of the organizers and most of the participants, that civil society brings to these processes a diverse array of subject-matter expertise in many of the policy areas addressed by the Summit, as well as the energy and resources to continue developing many applications and projects that give rise to the Information Society.

Civil society participation is critical not only because of the diversity of perspectives and expertise it brings to the table, but also because in many countries, these are the very organizations that will play a leading role in implementing the WSIS Plan of Action. Without the support and participation of these civil society organizations, the potential of the information and communication society will be severely limited. This dual reference to civil society as both an organization and an actor reflects the challenges pointed out by Keck & Sikkink: "part of what is so elusive about networks is that they seem to embody elements of agent and structure simultaneously" (1998, p. 5). They continue with the following:

When we ask who creates networks and how, we are inquiring about them as structures—as patterns of interactions among organizations and individuals. When we talk about them as actors, however, we are attributing to these structures an agency that is not reducible to the agency of their components. (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 5).

Based on our analysis, there appears to be a high level of *collaboration readiness* within the sector, with high levels of good will, information, sharing, trust, and basic asynchronous collaboration technology infrastructure. The sector has been aided by organizations, such as the APC, Computer Profes-

sionals for Social Responsibility, and others, in using e-mail lists and other CMC tools to attempt to harness the talents and energies of the members of its sector from around the world. While the diffusion of the more advanced technologies has not been as widespread within the sector as desired by its proponents, and while the organizational structures and decision-making capabilities need to be revised, the overall ability for the sector to collaborate is robust, resulting in a series of fine intellectual contributions to the WSIS preparatory process and to the Summit itself.

However, by any number of measures, the current WSIS process has not been able to include sufficiently the voices of civil society. For example, during Prepcom-3, the Civil Society delegates were not allowed to participate fully in the working groups where key and sometimes contentious issues of the draft WSIS Declaration of Principles and the WSIS Plan of Action were being discussed (civil society and private sector participation was limited to the first 5 minutes of the meeting). This led to considerable frustration and to the production of an analysis of civil society participation in the WSIS preparatory process called "From Input to Impact," which argued that more than 60% of the civil society recommendations to the final declaration had been completely ignored (Global Contract Foundation, 2003). Further, the decision to "resume" Prepcom-3 from November 10–14, 2003 without providing fellowships for civil society delegates, and even excluding some countries (e.g., Argentina) from receiving fellowships to the actual Summit, meant that key elements of the final documents were decided by a group too small to represent the multiple stakeholders and their diverse interests in the global Information Society.

As a result of these developments, many call WSIS a failure, and there are continued suggestions that the civil society should disengage from the process and refuse to continue being "pawns" in a multistakeholder process that will not fully consider and integrate their perspectives. On the other hand, if civil society can use the WSIS process as a catalyst for stimulating dense, robust networks that can engage more effectively in global governance processes, it will have been a tremendous success.

By one perspective, the civil society sector can be seen as an example for other participants in this global multistakeholder process. We have shown

that with limited resources, civil society has developed complex organizational structures sufficient to pull together coherent, focused, substantive, and powerful intellectual contributions to the WSIS process. We have shown that the WSIS civil society has a high degree of collaboration readiness, including high levels of cognitive and affective trust. These characteristics are critical to engaging in long-term, substantive, geographically distributed collaborative knowledge work. We have also shown how, although limited primarily to e-mail lists and Web-based archives, civil society has been able to use CMC tools to involve people from around the world in their WSIS policy activities.

However, if civil society organizations are to forge a success out of the WSIS process, they must overcome some major challenges. They must learn how to capture the full potential of their ostensible membership by better organizing the diverse and geographically distributed civil society participants from around the world.

The WSIS civil society must address the twin issues that continue to be the "elephant in the living room," of these multistakeholder global governance processes. These twin problems are legitimacy and structure. The legitimacy issue has multiple prongs (Hudson, 2001). First, there is the question of whom the participants in the WSIS civil society actually represent. The overall number of civil society participants is large. Most of them come from Western Europe (32%), are well educated (modal education level: master's degree), and male (64%). Africa makes up the second largest percentage of civil society delegates (27%). However, with some notable exceptions, there are few African delegates in formal or informal leadership positions within the civil society sector. Even fewer civil society leaders come from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, or the Middle East. Further, when many of the African delegates raise issues of importance to them, such as civil society support for the Digital Solidarity Fund, support for Tunisia as an African host for Phase II of the Summit, or increased mechanisms to facilitate enhanced virtual participation for those not physically able to attend the summit, these suggestions are generally met with lukewarm support, at best.

There are currently several major crises within the structure of civil society. There has been no resolution to numerous issues raised by delegates from around the world about the composition of the

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CSB, what role it should play vis-à-vis the plenary, how its members were appointed, whom they represent, whether or not the current members of the Bureau are supposed to continue into the second phase of the Summit, how individual members of the Bureau are replaced, what happens in the absence of a Civil Society Division (CSD) of the secretariat, and other unresolved issues. Individual caucuses have other problems, such as whether any member of the civil society Internet governance caucus will be chosen to participate in the UN Secretary General's Working Group on Internet Governance; and if so, who will be the "representative," how will they be chosen, and whom will they represent?

There seems to be no urgency to address these issues on the part of the members of the WSIS civil society. Currently, many of the fortunate ones are gearing up for the preparatory processes of the Tunis phase of WSIS. Many of the most fortunate are busy planning their travel plans to the seaside resort town of Hammamet, where Prepcom-1 will be held or to the numerous other thematic meetings that make up Phase II of the WSIS preparatory process. Yet the sector has not addressed any of the above issues, or prepared a strategy for what to do once those privileged few get to Tunis or the other venues. To date, there have been no widespread, systematic efforts to involve remote participants in the meetings, other than continuing the e-mail traffic (though actually, there has been relatively little substantive e-mail traffic on either plenary lists or the caucuses, which we monitor), and competing and uncoordinated offers to host civil society documents on various Web sites.

Perhaps most important, what happens to all of these issues when there is no funding available to support civil society participation in the process, or little willingness on the part of funding agencies and governments to commit the same level of funding as during the first phase of the Summit. Interestingly, the African civil society has been perhaps the most active since leaving the Summit in December 2003. They have evolved a number of structures and mechanisms for organizing their regional cooperation, which include closer involvement with governments, the relevant regional and subregional organizations, and the private sector.

These findings set up one of the more disturbing implications of this study. While the transnational civil society sector has overcome tremendous obsta-

cles, both internal and external, in its ability to organize itself in a geographically distributed manner using a wide range of CMC tools (though mostly limited to e-mail lists) and to tap into the creative energies, optimism, and dedication of those participating actively in the civil society sector, it has still had limited impact on the WSIS policy processes. Civil society efforts to promote a more socially oriented vision for the emerging global Information Society regime has been largely ineffectual. As a result, the WSIS policy documents represent more of an "information" society than the possible "communication" society articulated by some scholars (Ó Siochrú, 2004), and look much more like the Global Electronic Commerce (GII/GEC) regime than the Global Information Society (GII/GIS) regime described by others (Cogburn, 2003).

This reality has caused the conference organizers, participants, and supporters to assess what they learned from participation in Phase I of WSIS as they actively prepare for Phase II in Tunis. For the conference organizers—now located primarily within the Tunisian government—they see the added expense and logistical difficulties of trying to involve a diverse group of civil society voices from around the world. These realities are quite different from the private sector participants who not only fund their own travel and participation in these preparatory and Summit events, but often provide financial support for the Summit itself. Many civil society participants lack the financial resources to participate on their own, and thus require financial assistance from the organizers or external sources, such as private foundations and development agencies. For civil society organizations, several questions emerge, such as, "Was it worth the effort to participate with so much energy, and still achieve such mediocre results? Will civil society organizations ever be 'equal' partners with governments; and perhaps more importantly, should they?" For funding and supporting agencies, they question if they should continue supporting the travel, accommodation, and other expenses for civil society and developing country participants to attend these meetings. Even with that said, there are already over 45 civil society participants registered to attend the June Prepcom1 of the Tunis phase.

Another implication of this study is that there is a certain understandable irony in the tension between governments and civil society, particularly with

smaller governmental delegations. These small government delegations are often only one or two in number and must cope with complex substantive issues ranging from Internet governance to human rights. They are often unable to spread themselves across the wide varieties of thematic working groups. Even if they were able to attend to all of the themes, they frequently do not have the technical or substantive background on these issues. A great coalition could be formed by civil society organizations with their expertise and these small governments. Examples of this potential can be seen in the strategies employed by some civil society caucuses, such as the disability caucus, to work with like-minded government delegations to get their issues heard and included within the government plenary sessions.

One of the most encouraging findings in this study is that the majority of civil society participants are indeed members of global policy networks and that they draw heavily on existing epistemic communities. These policy networks and epistemic communities could be the basis upon which to build more robust structures—true transnational advocacy networks—to facilitate the geographically distributed collaboration of the sector. We will explore these possibilities in the future research described below.

#### *Implications for the Theoretical Model and Global Governance*

Based on this analysis, what follows are some initial thoughts about the relevance of the existing theoretical model. There seems to be an emerging recognition that an appropriate strategy might be to include civil society representatives within government delegations. This would allow civil society delegates to attend governmental meetings and “report” back to the overall civil society plenary about the debates, discussions, positions, and alternatives. One CSP member who produced an excellent account of the Paris Intersessional meeting suggested that this had been done with great success for one of the Western European delegations.

Further, this study supports the overall assertion of the model that international conferences matter to the global governance of cyberinfrastructure. These conferences play an important role in facilitating the convergence of expectations among actors that is required for regime formation to occur. In this case, the multiple WSIS preparatory processes, while contentious to the end, were able to keep most of

the relevant participants in this multistakeholder process on board and the final WSIS Declaration of Principles combined with the final WSIS Action Plan provide a framework for “governing” the Information Society between the December 2003 Geneva Summit and the November 2005 Tunis Summit.

#### **Recommendations for WSIS Phase II**

In closing, we offer three succinct recommendations that would contribute to Phase II. First, a significant effort on the part of the organizers should be made to ensure that multiple mechanisms of virtual participation are available to all aspects of the WSIS Phase II preparatory processes and to the Tunis Summit itself. These “virtual” mechanisms must go beyond additional mailing lists and Web sites with information. These virtual mechanisms should embrace the principles described above to support geographically distributed collaborative knowledge work and learning. These CMC tools should be highly-interactive, rich media, and include voice, video, whiteboards, slides, Web sites, and other digital media. They should include a focus on enhancing the connections between three aspects of distributed policy collaboration: (1) people-to-people communication, (2) people-to-resources and other forms of organically organized digital repositories, and (3) people-to-facilities, meaning synchronous access to the physical spaces of these preparatory meetings.

Second, since Phase II of WSIS is focusing on thematic issues, a significant effort should be invested in human capacity-building around these issues. Building the capacity for delegations around the world to understand many of the complex thematic issues that are emerging—such as global Internet governance—to assess how these issues impact them, and to develop policy positions on them will be critical. Further, training among the WSIS civil society about how to engage in multilateral diplomacy and to engage productively with governments and with private sector delegates would be invaluable. Here again, embracing the many lessons learned about how to build human capacity in a geographically distributed manner is crucial to the success of these capacity building efforts (Cogburn and Levinson, 2003).

Finally, the WSIS civil society should engage in the difficult work of dealing with the questions of representation, legitimacy, and structures within the sector. This difficult work includes developing the

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mechanisms for involving remote and diverse participation, creating structures that are as open and transparent as possible, taking steps to eliminate the cliquishness and secrecy (perceived or otherwise), developing coherent and consistent mechanisms for integrating and involving new people into the process, and evolving clear steps for decision making.

Unfortunately there are limited resources available to civil society, and even fewer institutional mechanisms. The institutional mechanisms that are there continue to fight and contest within the sector for primacy space, and to protect their positions as “representatives” of the world’s civil society. Governments do not have to deal with many of these issues. The United Nations certifies who are member-states, and each of those states has its own sovereignty and political processes—for better or worse—for determining who its representatives will be at such summits. The private sector, while still mostly representing the larger multinational corporations from the global North and not small, medium, and micro-sized organizations from the global South, has the resources to guarantee its participation. It is civil society that remains the most vulnerable in this process; and it is its own effective diverse voices that matter tremendously—even at a distance—to the success of the communication information and communication society, that are in danger of being silenced. ■

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### Appendix A

Initial Qualitative Coding Schema		
Primary Construct	Subtheme	Detailed Subtheme
Process	Prepcom-1	
	Prepcom-2	
	Prepcom-3	
Policy issue	Specific policy issue (e.g., Internet governance)	
Regime components	Principle-value	Trade and economic growth
	Norm	Social learning and interaction
	Rule	Existing ICT infrastructure
	Decision making	
	Enforcement	
Organizational practice	FTF	
	Distributed	
Collaboration readiness	Collaboration orientation	Collaboration practices
	Collaboration infrastructure	Existing ICT infrastructure
	Collaboration technology	Existing collaboration tools
Conference efficacy	Effective in process	
	Not effective in process	
Epistemic capacity	Knowledge identification	
	Knowledge mobilization	
Leadership	Task-focused leadership	
	Relationship focused leadership	
Trust	Affective trust	
	Cognitive trust	
Demographics	Gender	Male, female
	Region	NA, LAC, E, Africa, Asia
	Organization type	CS, G, business, IGO
	Name	Specific name
Policy-actor networks	Member	
	Formation	
	Name	
Experience in ICT	Comfort with ICT	
	Problem with ICT	
Language	English	
	Spanish	
	French	
	Other	
Regime preference	GII – GIS	
	GII – GEC	
Behavior	Public - frontstage	
	Private - backstage	