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## **Democratizing Global Communication? Global Civil Society and the Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society**

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This paper is a case study of the role of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) and multi-stakeholder governance processes in the formation of international communication-information policy. It analyzes the Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The paper combines methods of historical institutionalism and empirical social network analysis. It documents the important role of the CRIS campaign in determining the norms and modalities of civil society participation in WSIS, and provides a critical assessment of the ideology of "communication rights." The SNA data reveal the centrality of CRIS affiliate Association for Progressive Communications in WSIS civil society and the paper explains that centrality in terms of its organizational capacity to link multiple issue networks. The paper also explores the strengths and weaknesses of multi-stakeholder governance as revealed by the attempts to institutionalize WSIS civil society.

Imputed linkages between the institutions of democracy and the media of public communication are a staple of communication studies. Globalization poses a problem for these claimed links, however. The institutions for the realization of democracy are national in scope, but communications industries and information flows have become increasingly transnational. Internationally, there is anarchy among sovereign states and no global electorate or elections. Kahler and Lake (2004), drawing on the democratic theory of Dahl (1971), tick off the gap between established notions of democracy and the realities of international politics:

Nearly all definitions of democracy have at their core the idea of rule by the people. Such a standard has in turn three requirements: the members of a particular group..have the ability to communicate their preferences to those who act on their behalf, insure that their preferences are weighed equally in the formulation of policy, and remove leaders who fail to satisfy at least a majority of the members. Whether such

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a benchmark can be applied to international governance is a controversial issue. (Boli & Thomas, 1997; Kahler & Lake, 2004.)

What then does “democracy” mean at the international level?

One recent answer promotes the ideas of “global civil society” and “multi-stakeholder governance” as default solutions to the problem of democratizing international institutions (Calabrese, 2004; Florini, 2000; Keane, 2003; Price, 2003). *Global civil society* here refers to non-state actors developing and advocating some conception of the public interest across national borders. The concept embraces both international NGOs such as Amnesty International, and Internet-enabled advocacy networks that link and coordinate organizations and individuals in less formal structures (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The participation of nongovernmental actors in international institutions is further legitimized by new conceptions of “multi-stakeholder governance.” An admittedly ugly neologism, *Multi-StakeHolder* (MuSH) has etymological roots in the United Nations complex of organizations, where involved participants are often referred to as “stakeholders.” A somewhat idealized definition of the “multi-stakeholder process” (Banks, 2005, 85) is “the coming together of different interest groups on an equal footing, to identify problems, define solutions and agree on roles and responsibilities for policy development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.” Operationally, this means participation in intergovernmental policy deliberations by representatives of NGOs, businesses, and other interested parties alongside governments – sometimes as the peers of governmental representatives, but more often in consultative or advisory roles.

This paper is a case study of the role of advocacy groups and MuSH governance in international communication and information policy. It focuses in particular on the Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society (the CRIS Campaign) during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). WSIS was a United Nations process, the self-declared purpose of which was “to formulate a common vision and understanding of the global information society” and to address the “digital divide.” From the end of 2001 to November 2005, WSIS was the primary global forum for discussion of the full range of international communication-information policy issues. The CRIS Campaign started in 2001 as a response to WSIS by progressive groups involved in transnational advocacy around communication and information policy issues. CRIS and its affiliated organizations played an important role in galvanizing civil society participation and in determining the modalities of civil society participation.

The CRIS Campaign’s struggle to shape global norms by mobilizing civil society actors is instructive on several levels. First, it reflects a long-term attempt to formulate and apply an overarching ideology or frame to guide policy advocacy, an ideology that originated with communication scholars and which attempted to put exalted concepts of the social role of communication at the center of policy development. Our analysis suggests that this effort was not that successful -- but the attempt nevertheless holds important lessons for communication scholars interested in the relationship between communication studies and public policy. Additionally, the CRIS case can be used to apply theories about transnational advocacy and civil society to the specific domain of communication policy, offering insight into the ways communication policy issues can be framed as “global” and mobilize constituencies across borders. The case study also tests theories about the relationship between transnational advocacy and

international organizations, revealing the interdependence of the needs of international institutions for legitimacy and participation and the needs and incentives of advocacy groups. Last but not least, the results reveal the strengths and weaknesses of MuSH governance, and raise important questions about institutional changes at the international level motivated by the MuSH concept.

Though presented here as a case study, research on the CRIS Campaign was part of a larger research effort on transnational collective action in the communication and information policy domain.<sup>1</sup> That research applied social network analysis to WSIS civil society, and involved three other organizational case studies.<sup>2</sup> This allowed the researchers to provide some comparative and quantitative data about the civil society networks in which CRIS operated.

CRIS is examined here as a catalyst of a transnational advocacy campaign with intellectual roots in communication studies. In international relations theory, such campaigns are usually defined as “transnational advocacy networks” (TANs), which are composed of domestic advocacy organizations in different countries, international NGOs, individuals and persons in policy making positions in government, all connected through “dense exchanges of information” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The individuals and organizations that make up TANs are said to be motivated by values or principled ideas rather than material interests or professional norms. My analysis departs from standard TAN theory, however. While recognizing the importance of Keck and Sikkink’s documentation of the impact of civil society actors on international governance, I prefer to situate advocacy organizations and advocacy networks within broader *transnational policy networks* (TPNs), in which contentious political actors of *all* types cluster around authoritative institutions seeking influence. For definitions of policy and issue networks, see Hecl (1978), Marin and Mayntz (1991) and Jordan (1990). Policy networks converge strategically around institutions with some leverage over authoritative decisions and processes in their policy domain. While it is true that advocacy groups cooperate, network and coalesce with organizations and individuals who share their principles and values, we also must focus on their alliances and contention with other groups in the policy network, including especially those within international organizations. Transnational advocacy networks are not free-standing, homogeneous “network organizations,” but subsets of TPNs.

The CRIS Campaign itself had a formal organization with a paid, half time staff member, a web site, and an Executive Director. This small organization conceived of itself as a network organization that included individual scholars and activists, other organizations and other networks.

Understanding the CRIS Campaign as an element of a transnational policy network requires analysis of four interdependent elements:

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<sup>1</sup> The research project, “Movement in the Making?” was funded by the Ford Foundation, Electronic Media Policy Portfolio, Becky Lentz, Program Officer.

<sup>2</sup> Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), Free Software Foundation, and World Association of Community Radios (which goes by its French acronym AMARC).

- Its historical links to the MacBride Commission and the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates of the 1970s and 1980s.
- Its ideology of “communication rights” as an attempt to provide a frame that accomplished the dual goals of bridging a wide set of communication-information policy issues, and linking them to the human rights norms of the U.N. system.
- Its origin as a “campaign” that took advantage of the political opportunity created by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
- The scope, scale and structure of WSIS civil society, and the place of CRIS actors within it.

The narrative structure of the paper follows the four elements noted above.

## **1. Historical Legacy: From NWICO to WSIS**

There is a direct lineage between CRIS and the tumultuous battles over a proposed “New World Information and Communication Order” (NWICO) during the 1970s and early 1980s (MacBride Commission, 1980). If we trace its evolution over the whole period, we find consistency in the political goals and policies advocated, but an important, thought-provoking change in the nature of the actors driving the process – a shift from state actors to civil society actors.

### **1.1 D’Arcy and The Right to Communicate**

The phrase *right to communicate* was coined in 1969 by Jean d’Arcy, an official at the U.N. Office of Public Information and a leader of TV development in France. The development of that idea occurred throughout the 1970s in tandem with the awareness of the transformative potential of interactive telecommunication technologies. The right to communicate was originally conceived as a “new human right” to be implemented in international law.

Like many others at the time, D’Arcy thought that new technology was making it possible for people to participate interactively in all the social processes that affected them. This was the heyday of Marshall McLuhan and the growth of communication schools and departments. In 1965, d’Arcy attended a U.N. conference of experts to advise the newly formed satellite communication organization INTELSAT. Communications visionary Arthur C. Clarke, a good friend of D’Arcy’s, was the keynote speaker. The emergence of these new interactive communication capabilities, he believed, altered the nature of state sovereignty over communication services. The rights of ordinary people now able to horizontally participate in decision-making processes needed to be guaranteed and protected in new ways. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was perceived as inadequate for that task. D’Arcy concluded that “...the time will come when the UDHR will have to encompass a more extensive right than man’s right to information... This is the right of men to communicate.” (d’Arcy, 1969), p. 14.)

D’Arcy’s analysis galvanized an intellectual movement around a “right to communicate” (RTC). He was active for almost two decades in defining what he meant by the implication of person-to-person communication and the need for a break with traditional freedom of expression rights (d’Arcy, 1974). He made the foundation for his argument most explicit in 1983, in a prologue for a book on the right to

communicate (d'Arcy, 1983). There, he argued that freedom of expression rights, given their foundation in a print and broadcasting context, were anointed with a "mass media mentality" that conditioned people and citizens for more than a 100 years to accept as "normal and ineluctable" a top-down flow of non-diversified information (1983, p. xxii). This mode of communication was structurally perpetuated by mutually-reinforcing domestic and international communications regulatory regimes. But the advent of a new structurally unified world system of communication, he believed, warranted a radical break with traditional concepts of freedom of expression and its expansion into a broader *right to communicate* that would allow full citizen interaction with all governance processes.

These idealistic visions made their way into policy elites and international academic circles, especially in communication and journalism studies. In 1973 D'Arcy delivered the keynote speech at the annual meeting of the International Institute of Communication (IIC), an association for professionals, academics and policy makers in the field. For the next 10 years, meetings of the IIC dealt with attempts to define a right to communicate. A Right to Communicate Group was formed in 1974 and a Fund and Secretariat established at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu.<sup>3</sup> The concept also found an institutional base of support in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It was officially inscribed in UNESCO rhetoric at its 1974 General Conference, when Sweden succeeded in getting a resolution adopted on the right to communicate as "an overarching principle under which problems relating to mass media might be analyzed and corrective measures proposed"<sup>4</sup> (Carlsson, 2003). With the passage of this resolution, the initiative to formulate a definition moved to UNESCO's Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication.

## 1.2 Communication Rights and Geopolitical Power Politics

It is at this critical juncture that the attempt to formulate a right to communicate becomes linked, ideologically, politically and institutionally, with the non-aligned nations' movement of the 1970s and the debate over a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The non-aligned nations' movement (NAM) consisted of about 90 U.N. member states, most of them developing nations whose liberation from colonialism in the 1950s and '60s altered the balance of power in the U.N. system. Refusing to side with either the Soviet Union or the United States in the Cold War, these countries sought a new international economic order and later, as an extension of those demands, a new world information and communication order (Carlsson, 2003). Those calling for this new order pitted their demands directly against the post-World War II doctrine of the "free flow of information" promulgated by the United States. The nonaligned countries rejected the free flow doctrine, viewing it as a rationalization for dominance of international media systems by Western, mainly American, commercial interests. UNESCO-funded academic studies documented trade imbalances in motion pictures and other media content that favored the U.S. (e.g., Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974), and argued that new satellite technologies able to reach

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<sup>3</sup> The group, which disbanded in the early 1980s, was revived in 2001 and now runs a very informative website, <http://www.righttocommunicate.org>.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO Resolution 4.121: Right to Communicate, 1974. Text available at <http://www.righttocommunicate.org/viewDocument.atm?sectionName=rights&id=2>

across borders threatened to increase North-South imbalances and foster a “cultural imperialism” through news and entertainment media.

While anti-capitalist academics in Europe and the U.S. rallied to the support of NWICO, many western journalists and civil libertarians greeted it suspiciously, wary of the possibility that demands for more “balanced” information flows could serve as a rationale for assertions of state control over news and information, or for undermining the independence of journalists.<sup>5</sup> The advocates of communication rights contributed to this concern by fudging the issue of whether the right to communicate was individual or collective. The state-based NWICO adherents were putting forth a collective, sovereignty-based concept of communication rights.<sup>6</sup> In historical context, it was not unreasonable to see such an assertion of collective *sovereignty* rights as a threat to *individual* rights of freedom of expression and access to information. In the developing world of the 1970s, national governments commonly asserted their desire to control news flows into and out of their country, and democratic institutions and liberal freedoms were often weak and unstable.

The MacBride Commission was formed in 1977 in response to the NWICO conflicts. Officially known as the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, it was chaired by Seán MacBride (b. 1904, d. 1988), an Irish politician and human rights advocate who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974. D’Arcy himself and the intellectual movement around the right to communicate influenced the MacBride Commission process. D’Arcy participated directly in meetings of the Commission in 1979,<sup>7</sup> and both d’Arcy (1978) and Hamelink (1979) were among the experts engaged by UNESCO to produce specialized reports, known as the Mauve Papers, on various aspects of the Commission’s work (Carlsson, 2003; Harms, Richstad, & Kie, 1977).

The final report of the MacBride Commission endorses a “right to communicate,” and lent support to the NWICO demands of developing nations. The NWICO agenda was carefully filtered through the language and concerns of human rights. Ultimately, however, the Commission’s Report was interpreted in contextual and geopolitical terms, not through a careful reading of its text. It was taken, first, as endorsement of the developing nations’ demands for a NWICO, and second (despite many careful assurances and substantive proposals promoting free expression) as an attack on traditional principles of

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<sup>5</sup> World Press Freedom Committee (1981). Declaration of Talloires. Available on the Web at: <http://www.wpfc.org/site/docs/pdf/Publications/Declaration%20of%20Talloires.pdf> As an indication of how divisive the issue could be, Jean d’Arcy himself is listed as a signatory of the Talloire Declaration, thus he apparently joined the chorus of NWICO critics.

<sup>6</sup> In his 1979 Mauve Paper, for example, Hamelink (1979) defined a new international information order as: “an international exchange of information in which states, which develop their cultural systems in an autonomous way and with complete sovereign control of resources, fully and effectively participate as independent members of the international community.” In this formulation the relevant unit of analysis, and holder of communication rights, are states.

<sup>7</sup> “Since Beuve-Mery [the French Commissioner] virtually never spoke, D’Arcy’s insights into communication issues—satellites, WARC [World Administrative Radio Conference], UN/UNESCO media matters and the like—provided a substantial plus” (Harley 1993, p. 114).

freedom of information and expression. With its criticism of advertising-support and commercialism in the media, it also provoked opposition from commercial media in the West. As such, it received a hostile reception in the United States. The U.S. (in 1984) and Great Britain (in 1985) withdrew their membership and financial support from UNESCO, as the conservative nationalists of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations capitalized on the negative perceptions of the MacBride Report to make a political point. By 1989, with the end of the UNESCO 1982-89 plan, the concept of a *right to communicate* was stricken from the agenda of the chastened international organization.

### 1.3 The Phoenix-like Re-Emergence of Communication Rights

Where state actors left-off, non-state actors – journalists, activists and academics – took over. This most clearly occurred with the MacBride Roundtable, created in 1989 to stimulate discussion of issues embodied in the Commission's 1980 report. According to Richard Vincent, an early participant and organizer, "it was based on MacBride's own ideas on how the campaign might be taken to a civil society level given the disappointments he personally felt about what had transpired at UNESCO and the state level generally."<sup>8</sup> When MacBride died before he could implement the ideas, Colleen Roach, Cees Hamelink, Michael Traber and Kaarle Nordenstreng took the initiative. The Roundtable consisted of about 30 regular attendees drawn from the ranks of academia, developing country journalists, former MacBride Commissioners and other interested policy makers. In the early stages meetings were held in conjunction with conferences of the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR). For 10 years, the Roundtables met annually.<sup>9</sup>

Several other transnational activist networks concerned with communication-information policy formed in the 1980s. Notable organizations related to the later emergence of the CRIS Campaign include the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), founded in 1983, Vidéazimut, founded in 1989,<sup>10</sup> and the Association for Progressive Communications, which emerged from 1987-1990. Within this ecology, a small but dedicated network of activist-intellectuals – Hamelink, Seán Ó Siochrú, Bruce Girard, George Gerbner, Robert McChesney, Alain Ambrosi, Kaarl Nordenstreng, Mark Raboy, Pradip Thomas, Richard Vincent, Dee Dee Halleck and Michael Eisenmenger, to cite some of the most central – gained strength and confidence even as the world's communication policies moved sharply toward liberalization, markets and competition. Various permutations of these individuals, the groups they founded and the manifestos they issued combine and recombine in the mid-to-late 1990s: The Peoples Communication Charter (drafted by Hamelink in 1996)<sup>11</sup>; The Platform for Cooperation on Democratisation

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Vincent, personal email to author, 28 October, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> The MacBride Roundtable meeting notes are available online at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~rvincent/macbride.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Vidéazimut was an International Coalition for Democratic Communication with about 75 members located in about 35 countries in all continents, and was active until the late 1990s.

<sup>11</sup> The People's Communication Charter was an initiative of the Centre for Communication & Human Rights (Amsterdam, the Netherlands), the Third World Network (Penang, Malaysia), the Cultural Environment Movement (USA), and the AMARC-World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Peru/Canada). The Charter is available at <http://www.pccharter.net/charteren.html>



and Communication in London in 1996 (led by Ó Siochrú); Voices 21, a loose transnational umbrella association of the mostly the same academics and advocates, which issued the 1999 statement “A Global Movement for People’s Voices in the 21st Century.” By the time of its 1997 meeting, the MacBride Roundtable meeting record is able to report optimistically that:

“The various components of an international movement on media and communications, that can challenge the current neo-liberal orthodoxy, seem to be emerging. The creation of a global social movement - largely absent from the NWICO - requires a number of factors, among them a core constituency of on-the-ground activists who recognise their affinities and can mobilize in concerted actions; an understanding of the key global issues of the day and of the arenas in which they are fought out; and the capacity to get their message out both to natural allies in progressive movements and to the general public.” (*Boulder statement 1997.*)

The ambitious political vision of the advocacy network is evident. It viewed the absence of popular, “on-the-ground” support as responsible for the failure of the NWICO initiatives two decades earlier and consciously thought of itself as the vanguard of an international social movement that might overcome those obstacles by bringing together popular movements.

## 2. Ideology: Defining the “Right to Communicate”

As noted in the prior section, the core idea underlying the CRIS Campaign – the concept of a *right to communicate* (RTC) – has formed the basis of an intellectual and political movement for the past 35 years. Many of its principal adherents were or are rooted in academia, and might be characterized as the political offshoot of the critical communication scholarship of the 1960s and ‘70s. One can therefore speak of an ideology underlying the campaign. But, as part 2.3 below will make clear, the adoption of a “rights” label can also be seen as an adroit framing tactic that gave their policy agenda salience in the international arena where human rights norms and rules are well-established.

RTC is a general norm based on ideals of participatory democracy. It asserts that all citizens must have a say, a communication right, in any and every governance process that affects them. It believes that a “right to hear and be heard, to inform and be informed,”<sup>12</sup> and “to participate in public communication” (MacBride Commission, 1980) should be the touchstone of communication policy. These claims are presented as a “new human right” that expands and supersedes the individual rights of freedom of speech, the press, and assembly associated with classical liberalism. Free expression, the advocates of RTC believe, is enhanced by constructing an environment that facilitates full, well-rounded human communication. The environmental factors that realize “communication rights” are rather sweeping, including such things as improved education, “a diverse and independent media,” the “elimination of prejudice, hatred, discrimination and intolerance,” and the “promotion of cultural and social self-determination.” Theorists of CR contend that these broader “flanking” conditions enhance liberal freedoms,

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<sup>12</sup> Telecommission of Canada, *Instant World* (Ottawa, Information Canada, 1971), p. 4; cited in McIver et al, 2004.

and thus their writings do not dwell on how conflicts between them might arise, or how they would want to see such conflicts resolved.

The communication rights ideology is persistently unclear about whether RTC is an individual right or a collective right (e.g., MacBride Commission, 1980; McIver, 2003). Theorists routinely claim that it is both. A UNESCO report from 1989 is typical, defining the right to communicate as “a fundamental right of the individual and... a collective right, guaranteed to all communities and all nations.” There is very little analysis of the contradictions and ambiguities that such a combination creates.<sup>13</sup> Communities, nations and individuals can and often do assert conflicting claims against each other in numerous areas of communication-information policy (such as public security vs. privacy and free expression, or in cultural and religious conflicts over educational policy). It is, moreover, a practical issue and not just a problem of theoretical consistency. Tension between individual and collective formulations of RTC caused the movement considerable grief during the NWICO episode, and continues to generate controversies today.

The breadth and incompleteness of the RTC sustains three different worldviews, sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting, each associated with different people and organizations involved with the Campaign.

## **2.1 The “Legalistic” Worldview**

One perspective, best represented today by Dutch communication scholar Cees Hamelink, wishes to see a universal “Right to Communicate” become part of international law. This worldview, which was the original one, is legal and institutional. It was conceived of as an elaboration and improvement of the basic human rights enshrined in the U.N.’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and can be seen as an expression of the international legal, academic and professional communities’ tendency to formulate ever-broader, more expansive definitions of human rights. From a state-centered perspective, this worldview promoted the creation of a new legal instrument, with explicit measurement and verification potential.<sup>14</sup> From a civil society perspective, it was a view emerging from the MacBride Roundtables and academic communication scholarship in the 1970s and ‘80s.

Hamelink has developed a manifesto enumerating the implications of a universal right to communicate (See Appendix 1). It was delivered at the WSIS Plenary during Phase 1 and has since been widely circulated. Hamelink’s enumeration sets out a sweeping set of entitlements, both positive and negative.<sup>15</sup> The claims set out there, precisely because they are more concrete than most other discussions, reveal some of the conceptual problems alluded to above: they have unclear boundaries relative to other key human rights, such as privacy, free expression and property, and their internal consistency could be questioned. Hamelink’s “protection rights,” for example, could easily be used to rationalize censorship.

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<sup>13</sup> Hamelink provides a typically rudimentary discussion of this problem, saying only that there “may be conflicts between individual and collective rights” and that “this needs careful balancing” (Hamelink, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.righttocommunicate.org/viewGroup.atm?sectionName=rights&id=3>

<sup>15</sup> See also Hamelink, 1998.

## 2.2 The Liberal Worldview

A second viewpoint is favorably disposed toward the banner of a “right to communicate” but thinks of it in ways more consonant with classical liberalism. In this worldview, the *right to communicate* is basically a new label for traditional, but still vital and evolving, informational and communicative civil liberties. The CRIS Campaign’s charter, which speaks of “Reclaiming Civil and Political Rights,” invites this reading. D’Arcy’s original discussions argued that collections of freedoms representing separate spheres of communication – assembly, speech, press – needed to be grouped under “a positive human right encompassing all these freedoms and more. The right to communicate would serve as an umbrella of an ‘ascending progression’ of rights and freedoms” (D’Arcy 1983).

But for advocates of the full interpretation, application, and implementation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the creation of a new legal instrument for communication rights is problematic. They prefer to work within the framework of the still not fully realized Article 19.<sup>16</sup> They have also called attention to tensions or contradictions between some formulations of the right to communicate and prior concepts of freedom of expression. The UK-based transnational NGO *Article XIX* publicly criticized a CRIS declaration on the right to communicate as having the potential to weaken or endanger the freedom of opinion and expression provisions of the UDHR.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the assertion of “collective rights” over all development and applications of communication technologies and infrastructures has great potential to conflict with traditional liberal notions of communicative freedom.

Once again the distinction between individual and collective rights surfaces: there is an inherent tension between the liberal worldview, which seeks to protect individuals from forms of control and repression that could just as easily come from democratic processes as from any other source, and the collectivist, egalitarian thrust of the other worldviews. As Hamelink asserted in defending the RTC view against its liberal detractors, “communication processes belong to a much broader domain than that covered by a right to freedom of information. The right to communicate addresses the core of the democratic process as well as the essence of most social and personal relations.”<sup>18</sup> Liberal sympathizers with the communication rights perspective, such as Article XIX’s Law Programme Director, emphasize the complementary relationship between freedom of expression and the broader set of concerns advocated by

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<sup>16</sup> Article 19 holds that: “Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.”

<sup>17</sup> See “Article 19 critiques draft declaration on the Right to Communicate.”

<http://www.ifex.org/fr/content/view/full/33439>. CRIS Response: “CRIS and the right to communicate: A brief response to Article 19.

[http://www.crisinfo.org/index.php/newsroom/cris/cris\\_and\\_the\\_right\\_to\\_communicate\\_a\\_brief\\_response\\_to\\_article\\_19](http://www.crisinfo.org/index.php/newsroom/cris/cris_and_the_right_to_communicate_a_brief_response_to_article_19)

<sup>18</sup> Hamelink, “CRIS and the Right to Communicate: A Brief Response to Article 19,” CRIS Newsroom, URL: <http://www.crisinfo.org/content/view/full/157>

CRIS, saying that they are “cumulatively, more than the sum of their parts.” Liberal detractors, such as the World Press Freedom Committee, see communication rights as a “code word” for greater regulation of expression in the service of an attempt to collectively manage and direct all social communication processes (Greene, 2000).

### 2.3 The (Dominant) Normative-Tactical Worldview

A third view of communication rights, a position most clearly articulated by CRIS Campaign director Seán Ó Siochrú, sees it as a broad normative banner and the language of “rights” more as a framing tactic than as something to be taken literally and applied legalistically. This worldview steps away from the legacy of d’Arcy and openly acknowledges, even embraces, the lack of precision in the norm. It is the very incompleteness of the idea that makes it possible to serve as a banner that can be waved by neo-Marxists, feminists, liberals, human rights advocates, social democrats and many other social movements involved in communication-information policy.

Ó Siochrú believes that using communication rights in this way facilitates the ongoing development of consensual knowledge among non-state actors about communication policy issues. The indivisibility of rights will necessarily generate conflicts around norms of communications rights, and these conflicts need to be accommodated. Advocates who wish to move away from a legalistic framework for the adoption and diffusion of communication rights welcome these conflicts as deliberative and rhetorical opportunities that lend themselves to the consolidation of a position that is persuasive to state targets both domestically and in international institutions.

Despite CRIS’ historical ties to the legalistic view and its alliances with civil society actors holding more liberal views, it is this third worldview that prevailed during WSIS. Around 2002, the CRIS Campaign consciously abandoned the idea of creating a new right to communicate as international law and began to use it as an organizing framework as described above. According to Anriette Esterhuysen of the Association for Progressive Communications, normative and tactical considerations were central to the decision to adopt the term *communication rights* for the WSIS campaign. Esterhuysen noted the lack of a “language of solidarity in the information and communication field” at the time of the Campaign’s inception. The organizations involved appropriated the language of “rights” in order to facilitate a “shared identity” among all the different struggles going on in communication-information policy.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Sally Burch of ALAI in Ecuador explained that early on the WSIS process was characterized by a very “technocratic” approach to the issues, emphasizing infrastructure construction and technology diffusion. The initiators of what became the campaign wanted to broaden the WSIS discussion and to make sure human rights and social issues were confronted. It was therefore a tactical move to frame the discussion using the language of rights.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, CRIS educational materials continue to retell the history of the term and connect it to the ideological and political battles over NWICO of the late 1970s and early

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<sup>19</sup> See Heinrich-Boell Foundation (2005), News Release, “WSIS as a case of information capitalism? Critical Perspectives at Incomunicado Conference.”

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. See also the news release in Nov. 2001 announcing the launch of the CRIS Campaign, available at [http://www.cmn.ie/cmnsitenew/current/march2002/comm\\_rights\\_cris2.htm](http://www.cmn.ie/cmnsitenew/current/march2002/comm_rights_cris2.htm)

1980s.<sup>21</sup> Usage of the term thus provides a dual function, serving as a broad normative banner but also linking those who care to pursue the ideas to the more developed ideology underlying the term.

A purely tactical appropriation of rights language comes at a price, however. It downplays the issue of how communication rights are translated into real institutions and processes, which in turn blunts the campaign's ability to develop and propose concrete policies and reforms. Advocacy remains primarily at the normative level – or requires a total transformation of society (e.g., the complete elimination of “capitalism”). Perhaps in recognition of these tensions, near the end of the WSIS process, according to Ó Siochrú, the CRIS Campaign decided to “reframe” communication rights away from the classical human rights paradigm and toward a more standard, neo-Marxist emphasis on “class, neo-colonialism in the form of neo-liberalism, and other structural issues.” Ó Siochrú writes:

The trouble with the international human rights regime (which is also national to the extent that almost every government nominally endorses it) is that *even were it enforced*, it does not address structural inequality embedded with for instance capitalism and its drive to constantly expand its terrain of control.<sup>22</sup>

In this version, RTC devolves into a variant of neo-Marxism or some other, non-communication based, ideologies favoring radical democracy. Thus at its core, the CRIS Campaign's ideology is based more on ideals of participatory democracy than on a rights framework as that term is normally used in liberal discourse. The “democratization” label in use by the “Platform” group prior to its adoption of the CRIS label was a more accurate if less potent and broadly appealing term for the group's agenda.

### 3. CRIS and the World Summit on the Information Society

The most interesting part of the CRIS Campaign was the nature of its engagement with international institutions. This section describes and analyzes that engagement, drawing on the branch of political science that attempts to analyze and explain social movements and contentious politics (McAdam, et al, 1996). The Timeline (Figure 1) documents the sequence of the CRIS Campaign's formation.

We have already noted the CRIS Campaign's ambitious self-conception as the vanguard of a transnational social movement. In the academic literature on social movements, the concepts of *political opportunity*, *mobilizing structures* and *repertoires of contention* are used to explain why and how collective action takes place or sustained movements form. *Political opportunity* refers to some change or opening in the political process that can be exploited by challengers to advance their agenda; e.g., an overture from allies within a ruling elite, a demonstration of vulnerabilities by those in power, a chance to exploit divisions or rivalries within a power structure. *Mobilizing structures* are the connective tissues among the members of a movement that facilitate coordinated collective action. They “link leaders and

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<sup>21</sup> See for example, the Campaign's 88-page organizing handbook “Assessing Communication Rights: A Handbook.” <http://www.crisinfo.org/pdf/ggpen.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Seán Ó Siochrú, “Comments on TNCA Project case study of the CRIS campaign,” correspondence with author, 10 October, 2005.

followers, center and periphery, and different parts of a movement sector, permitting coordination and aggregation among movement organizations and allowing movements to persist even when formal organization is lacking" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 124). Repertoires of contention are the recognizable genres of action used by a movement to press its claims, such as protest marches, petitions, civil disobedience, or publicity campaigns.

Cast in these terms, the CRIS campaign was formed because of the political opportunity presented by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). WSIS Civil Society, which was afforded a recognized place in the summit process, became the CRIS Campaign's mobilizing structure. And the Campaign's repertoire of contention was defined and constrained by the United Nations process, which relies on verbal interventions in negotiations among governments and the production of statements or declarations in response to the specific issues raised by the Summit. The repertoire was thus largely normative, relying on persuasion and discussion. It also, however, encompassed protest actions around the periphery of the WSIS process.<sup>23</sup> The following analysis concentrates on analysis of the political opportunity and mobilizing structure.

### **3.1 WSIS as Political Opportunity**

Plans for a World Summit put the full range of public policies regarding the development and construction of an "information society" into play globally. This created an unparalleled opportunity for advocacy groups to engage with international organizations and governments around communication-information policy. Such engagement improved the involved organizations' opportunities for recruiting, influence, funding and publicity. But another factor contributed greatly to the opportunity: the large, widely publicized protests against international organizations characteristic of the late 1990s. The demonstrations put international organizations on the defensive and raised concerns about their legitimacy. As Moll and Shade (2004) wrote,

After the battles in Seattle, Quebec City and Genoa, international bodies realize that they ignore civil society at their own risk. The days of relegating the most important participants to an off-site venue, so as not to disturb the real summit, as happened at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, are clearly over (Moll & Shade, 2004).

Decision-makers in those organizations were pushed toward greater inclusion, opening the door to civil society actors.

In the early planning stages of WSIS, several overtures to civil society were made. In December 2000, Mohammed Harbi, a special advisor to the Secretary General of the ITU, told a community networking workshop attended by some of the Platform/Voices21 activists that "the ITU was now trying to

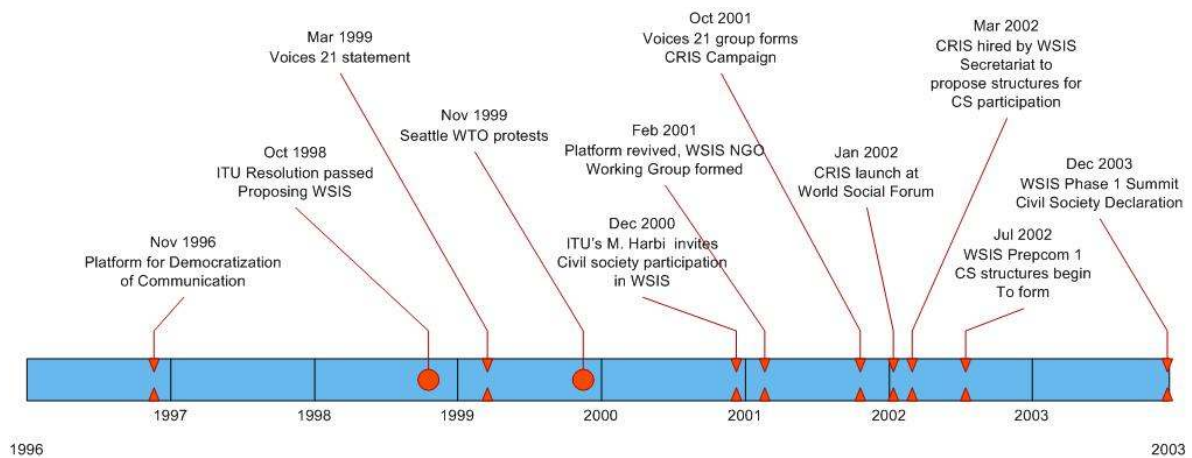
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<sup>23</sup> A series of actions publicized as "WSIS? We Seize" was carried out around the Geneva Summit. This project was organized by Indymedia activists but had strong participation from a few CRIS affiliates.

convince the U.N. General Assembly of the need for WSIS to be fully representative of the four partners<sup>24</sup> on an equal footing,” and that “ITU and he personally would be pushing for full civil society participation.”<sup>25</sup> This overture alerted the Campaign founders to the potential of the proposed Summit, and “sparked the imagination” of certain activists (Raboy, 2004, 95). Sensing an opportunity, the core group revived the Platform for Democratization of Communication and formed a working group to monitor the progress of World Summit plans. This led directly to the decision to launch a Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information society during an early November 2001 meeting at the London offices of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC). The purpose of the newly-launched CRIS Campaign would be “to ensure that communication rights are central to the information society and to the upcoming WSIS (Raboy, 2004a).”

Harbi’s promise seemed to be fulfilled a year later, when the U.N. General Assembly resolution authorizing WSIS encouraged “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.”<sup>26</sup> A Civil Society Division was created as part of the WSIS Executive Secretariat, directed by Alain Clerc and Louise Lassonde. The interdependence of the advocates and the institutions was more or less directly acknowledged, with the advocacy groups needing a platform for disseminating their message and the U.N. institution needing the legitimacy and relevance conferred by the broad participation of organized civil society groups.

**Figure 1. CRIS Timeline**



<sup>24</sup> The “four partners” meant UN Agencies, national governments, private business, and civil society.

<sup>25</sup> Proceedings, Communication as a Human Right in the Information Society, A seminar organized by the Platform for Communication Rights and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Geneva, Nov. 19-20, 2001. [http://www.crisinfo.org/documents/geneva\\_seminar/geneva\\_nov01.htm](http://www.crisinfo.org/documents/geneva_seminar/geneva_nov01.htm).

<sup>26</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183, 21 December, 2001.

### 3.2 WSIS Civil Society as Mobilizing Structure

One of the most important and impressive aspects of the CRIS Campaign was its co-evolution with the WSIS process itself. The campaign's principal actors played an important role in proposing, defining and operating the very structures through which civil society participated in WSIS; these structures then became an effective method for reaching and mobilizing larger numbers of people and gaining support for their ideas and their organization. WSIS civil society (hereafter, WSIS-CS) became the campaign's basic mobilizing structure.

Only a few weeks after the launch of the CRIS Campaign, the group held a workshop in Geneva, Switzerland, titled "Communication as a Human Right in the Information Society: Issues for the World Summit on the Information Society." By creating opportunities to interact with the Geneva-based representatives from the WSIS Secretariat, ITU and UNESCO, the seminar was intended to allow CRIS to influence WSIS planning on the question of civil society participation and the scope of the WSIS agenda.<sup>27</sup> That plan worked.<sup>28</sup> The event was in effect the first formal consultation between the Summit organizers and "civil society" as represented by the CRIS campaign and its network. The WSIS Secretariat was still in the early stages of planning. Though it was committed rhetorically to a "tripartite Summit" in which civil society, business and governments would interact more or less as peers, the U.N. administrators had no idea how to execute that concept.<sup>29</sup> How would civil society organizations be accredited? Who would represent them in speeches and discussions? To what degree would civil society representatives, or individual actors from civil society, participate in decision making and in the drafting of the WSIS Declaration and Plan of Action?

Seizing the moment, CRIS activists put themselves forward as intermediaries who could develop proposals for civil society participation in the WSIS. Within two months they were duly commissioned by the WSIS Secretariat to do just that.<sup>30</sup> CRIS was given a chance to enact its norms regarding participatory governance on a grand scale.

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<sup>27</sup> See Tracking Magazine (2002). Communication Rights in the Information Society: A Platform initiative for the WSIS. The Campaign's news release described it as "an opportunity for media NGOs and public service media to develop positions and put them to the WSIS." Available at [http://www.cmn.ie/cmnsitenew/current/march2002/comm\\_rights\\_cris2.htm](http://www.cmn.ie/cmnsitenew/current/march2002/comm_rights_cris2.htm)

<sup>28</sup> "The Geneva Workshop ... was very successful ... in generating serious interaction between ITU, UNESCO and civil society, and was the first occasion for a debate on the WSIS and civil society. It set us up early as potentially having a lead role in the process." Seán Ó Siochrú, "Comments on TNCA Project case study of the CRIS campaign," correspondence with author, 10 October, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> "Highlights of the CRIS Campaign," Media Development 2002/4, [http://www.wacc.org.uk/wacc/publications/media\\_development/2002\\_4/highlights\\_of\\_the\\_cris\\_campaign](http://www.wacc.org.uk/wacc/publications/media_development/2002_4/highlights_of_the_cris_campaign)

<sup>30</sup> See Comunex, "Civil Society Participation in the WSIS," <http://comunex.comunica.org/wsisp/>. See also Sean O'Siochru and Bruce Girard, "Report of Working Group on Civil Society Participation: 'Process'" UNESCO WSIS Civil Society Consultation, Paris, 22nd and 23rd April, 2002.



Table 1 shows the number of accredited civil society participants in the Geneva Summit and the preparatory events leading up to it. At the first WSIS preparatory meeting in July 2002, 30 CRIS members and about 200 other accredited civil society participants arrived “with goodwill and optimism.” But they soon were exposed to the hard political realities of the intergovernmental system. For three days, government delegates held procedural debates on whether and to what extent business and civil society representatives would be allowed to speak. (Raboy, 2004a) For the rest of the Summit process, the status of civil society and private sector participants was a point of tension and instability, and renegotiated at every turn.<sup>31</sup> While WSIS civil society never achieved the peer status that it felt it deserved, the Summit never reverted to a purely intergovernmental affair, either. WSIS went on to pioneer new experiments in MuSH governance, such as the Working Group on Internet Governance and its successor, the Internet Governance Forum.

**Table 1: Civil Society Participation in WSIS**

<b>WSIS Event ( Geneva Phase)</b>	<b>Civil society participants</b>
PrepCom 1	223
PrepCom 2	398
PrepCom 3	537
Geneva Summit	3,418

Source: International Telecommunication Union

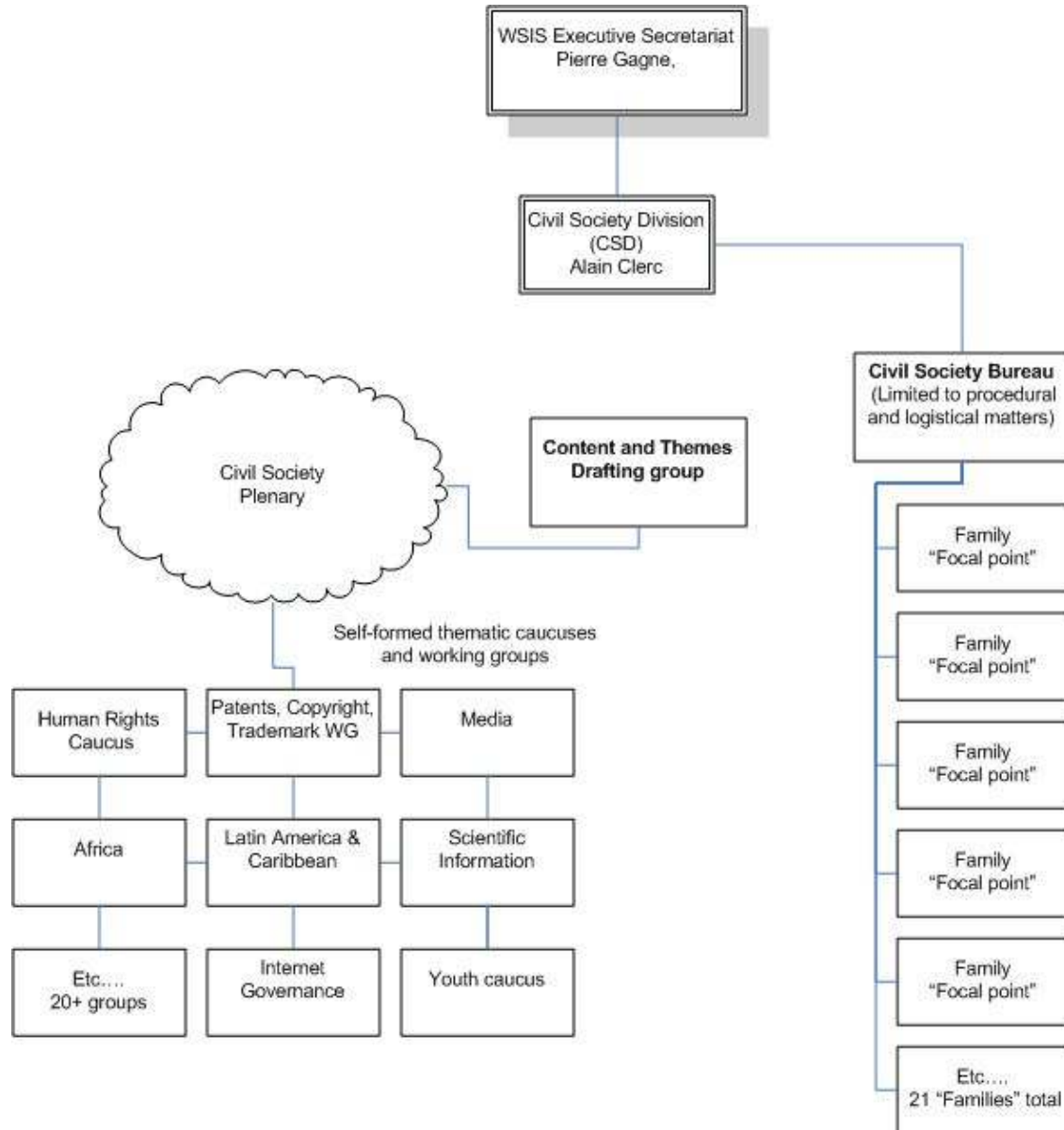
Though ultimately frustrated and disappointed by their less than equal status, CRIS helped form a civil society Plenary at the first Prepcom, and decided to continue to participate in the WSIS process “on the basis of skeptical engagement.” The basic structure of civil society participation as it evolved in WSIS Phase 1 is outlined in Figure 2. WSIS-CS came to be organized around self-formed thematic and regional caucuses,<sup>32</sup> with two key organs of coordinated collective action across these domains: the Content and Themes group, a drafting group which produced statements as official civil society input into the process, and the Civil Society Plenary, a completely open physical and virtual assembly which nominally held the role of “ultimate civil society authority in the WSIS process.”<sup>33</sup> The Content and Themes group was coordinated by CRIS principals Sally Burch and William Mclver. The Plenary was chaired by a succession of participants --- at first by Renata Bloem of the U.N.’s Congress of NGOs, later by APC’s Karen Banks and other CRIS principals. The email communication lists of both organs were hosted by APC’s GreenNet and administered by APC’s Banks, also a key member of the Content and Themes group.

<sup>31</sup> W. Kleinwachter described the situation as the “revolving door to the negotiating room” as observers were included then excluded then invited back in or fed information from the inside (Kleinwachter, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Examples are the Human Rights Caucus, the Patents, Copyright and Trademark Working Group, the Media Caucus, Community Media Caucus, etc., as well as regional caucuses for Africa, Latin America, Europe and others. The caucuses as of mid-2005 were listed at <http://www.wsis-cs.org/caucuses.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Sean O’Siochru, Wolfgang Kleinwachter, Renata Bloem, “Overview of Civil Society Elements and How to Get Involved.” 9 December, 2003. <http://www.wsis-cs.org/cs-overview.html>

Figure 2. WSIS Organizational Structure



A third civil society organ was the Civil Society Bureau (CSB). The CSB was intended to serve as the official interface with the Intergovernmental Bureau. It was proposed by the Summit's official Civil Society Secretariat as a formal representative body composed of delegates sent from a rather arbitrarily-defined taxonomy of civil society sectors, called "families." The procedures for selecting representatives

from families were never well-defined. The title “representative” was later replaced by the term “focal points.”<sup>34</sup> Standard procedures for creating new families or eliminating atrophied ones were never created. Its intended status as a representative body was eviscerated as the number of “family” groups ballooned from 10 to 21, making the categories even more overlapping and arbitrary. At one point in the process the ITU-appointed chair of civil society was forced to step down during a confrontation with a roomful of angry NGOs, and was replaced by a chair elected by the civil society plenary.

There was a thus major disjunction between “bottom-up” civil society, with its organically evolved structures formed in response to the entrepreneurial efforts of the advocacy network led by CRIS, and “top-down” civil society, the structure created and recognized by the U.N. bureaucracy. The official Civil Society Division administrators hailed the CSB’s creation as a “historic event.”<sup>35</sup> It was perceived by the CRIS-led advocacy network, in contrast, as potentially undermining the autonomy of civil society participation, as it could be used to bypass the self-formed thematic/regional caucuses and Plenary structure and substitute in its place a structure controlled by U.N. administrators. For that reason, CRIS and its supporters pressed to limit its authority to procedural and logistical matters. They succeeded largely in that goal: CSB would get rooms for civil society meetings and be informed of the number and time of speaking slots. The development of substantive statements remained with Content and Themes and the Plenary. Speaker lists occupied a contested middle ground. The CSB structure was thus almost completely disconnected from the thematic caucuses and the plenary, and over time, the gulf widened.

The problems of representation and institutionalization that crippled the CSB were in fact endemic to all of WSIS-CS. Throughout most of the bottom-up structures, there were no formalized mechanisms for regularly electing or replacing representatives, coordinators or chairs. Decision-making processes were usually improvised. At best, they were consensual; at worst, they were made informally by one or two people or by small cliques in a non-transparent manner. Most of the time, however, it was simply a matter of whoever got into a position first stayed there until they agreed to leave, as there were no formalized procedures for replacing or removing them. The WSIS-CS model of decentralized, voluntarist caucuses held together by email lists and consensual decision making in an open plenary was workable only insofar as participation was confined to a small and ideologically compatible group of transnational advocacy groups. As soon as these structures were confronted with larger-scale participation and real ideological and political differences, they proved unwieldy or broke down.

In that environment, the Content and Themes group emerged as the real power behind WSIS-CS’s voice, and that group was clearly influenced most strongly by CRIS principals and allies who had established themselves as its leaders in the early days of WSIS Phase 1. Content and Themes was the gatekeeper, in control of the vital bandwidth for authoritative public communication between civil society, the public and the other sectors. Serving in that leadership capacity, and blocked from direct participation

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<sup>34</sup> For a listing of the WSIS “Families” see <http://www.un-ngls.org/ws-is--csb--families.htm>.

<sup>35</sup> “The Civil Society Bureau is a decisive turning point in the history of the United Nations and of international negotiations. Indeed, it is the first time that civil society will have the means to effectively participate in the debate and will assume its responsibilities as a government interlocutor.” Alain Clerc, WSIS Newsroom Newsletter, 22 April 2003. <http://www.itu.int/ws-is/newsletter/2003/apr/a2.html>

with governments in formulating the official WSIS documents, the Content and Themes group facilitated the drafting of a “Civil Society Declaration” -- a parallel and alternative definition of the norms and policies of the information society.<sup>36</sup>

The core network of advocacy groups – composed of the CRIS Campaign organizers, APC, AMARC, human rights groups, youth groups, feminist groups and ICT for Development groups – displayed remarkable energy, capacity and staying power over the three year period. In that respect, the opening to popular mobilization afforded by WSIS-CS worked amazingly well. On the other hand the perceived need for civil society to be an influential force, equal in status to governments and the private sector, created an imperative for coordinated, unified responses from “Civil Society” as a sector. This demanded a level of institutionalization that was never quite achieved. To the extent that civil society had any capacity to issue unified statements and designate speakers in WSIS, the network of CRIS and APC actors provided much of the ideas and organizational capacity. To be sure, the decentralized, open structures of WSIS-CS at the ground level permitted autonomous mobilization and participation, allowing even avowed enemies of CRIS like the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) to participate and sometimes constrain the Campaign’s ability to put forward its own ideology as the voice of civil society.<sup>37</sup>

For WSIS civil society, the unresolved institutional issues latent in MuSH governance came to a head June 24, 2004, at the first PrepCom of the second phase of WSIS. This meeting was held in Hammamet, Tunisia, the country which would also host the second Summit. The controversial choice of Tunisia as a host country for Phase 2 was contested by many human rights groups because of the Tunisian government’s overt suppression of political dissent. Provoked by civil society’s mounting criticism of Tunisia, and in particular by WSIS-CS’ decision to nominate a person from a banned Tunisian human rights organization for a speaking slot in the official plenary, a large number of new organizations from Tunisia and a few other African countries suddenly populated the civil society plenary at the Hammamet meeting. They aggressively challenged the process and legitimacy of WSIS-CS’ decision to select the Tunisian speaker; further, they demanded to be included in all WSIS-CS processes, including the CS Bureau, Content & Themes, and various caucuses and working groups. The CS plenary meeting degenerated to the point that APC’s Karen Banks, who was plenary chair at the time, was shouted down. This conflict, in the words of one civil society activist present, “revealed the fragility of what we had built” (Panganiban, 2005). Banks herself later noted that the governments of China and Tunisia had blocked the accreditation of independent human rights groups from their countries; she criticized the way the intergovernmental process allowed repressive countries to exclude civil society groups while permitting the inclusion of “a well-organized, pro-government civil society lobby from Tunisia that has continuously suppressed any references to human rights abuses by the Tunisian government and successfully exacerbated friction among civil society, particularly along North-South lines, by skillfully playing the race card” (Banks, 2005, 86).

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<sup>36</sup> “Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs,” Civil Society Declaration to the World Summit on the Information Society. 8 December 2003. <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/civil-society-declaration.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> For records of the WPFC’s opposition to and critiques of CRIS, see <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/20101.htm>

Thus, the CRIS-inspired plan for civil society participation in WSIS did not come to grips with the structural and political problems posed by the need to institutionalize participation by non-state actors in international policy making. The CRIS proposals seemed to be animated, instead, by two simpler objectives: 1) a desire to mobilize the kind of transnational activist networks and NGOs with which it was familiar and compatible, and 2) a desire to ensure that those networks and NGOs would be heard in WSIS deliberations. Its plans thus emphasized opportunities for mobilization and structures for self-organization and self-expression, but avoided almost completely the problem of creating mechanisms for legitimate representation and collective decision-making. By the end of the first phase of WSIS it had become evident that the longer-term institutional issues could not be avoided. The absence of representation and decision making mechanisms continuously ground away at WSIS-CS's capacity and legitimacy. Midway into the second phase of WSIS, Ó Siochrú could, to his credit, openly admit "We believe there is still a major legitimacy deficit in the whole of civil society structures."<sup>38</sup>

#### 4. CRIS and the WSIS Civil Society Network

The concept of "network" – of nodes and linkages between nodes – is central to the theory of TANs and other discussions of allegedly new, "networked" forms of governance. Understanding the structure of the underlying social networks becomes even more important in the absence of formalized governance structures. (Borgatti & Foster, 2003) In effect, the social network structure becomes the governance structure. It makes sense, then, to formally examine the CRIS Campaign's place in WSIS civil society using network modes of analysis.

Based on survey data, we performed a social network analysis of individuals involved in transnational civil society advocacy around communication-information policy issues. Each respondent was asked to provide a list of ten individuals "that you correspond or meet with regarding your advocacy work most frequently and consistently over time." They were also asked to list the organizations they "work with most closely... now or in the last five years." Finally, they were asked to list all "the international meetings related to your advocacy you attended in 2003, 2004, and 2005." In total, we approached about 100 WSIS-CS participants, and secured mapping surveys from 55 of them. Six of the interviewees proved to be disconnected from the others, leaving a total of 49 nodes in a connected social network.<sup>39</sup>

The results produced a network structure of 49 unique individuals linked by 143 interpersonal relationships. The network density (matrix average) equaled 0.0608 (SD = 0.239). The average path distance between reachable node pairs is 3.233, with a maximum of 8 links. More than 275 organizations were identified by the subjects, including loosely affiliated or time-limited working groups, formally

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<sup>38</sup> "Report of the Networks & Coalition Family to the [Civil Society] Bureau," 27 December 2004, <http://www.un-ngls.org/wsisis%20N&C%20family%20report2.doc>

<sup>39</sup> Work by other researchers corroborates the representational status of our surveyed respondents. A frequency count of the emails exchanged on the Plenary listserv identifies a group of 57 civil society actors who posted most frequently. Their list of the most active 57 posters and our surveyed population of 55 overlap greatly, particularly the top 20 most active and most central participants. (Zakaria & Cogburn, 2006).

structured domestic and international NGOs, and intergovernmental institutions. Respondents reported attending 415 separate events, occurring on almost every continent and involving a wide array of governmental, private sector, and civil society actors.

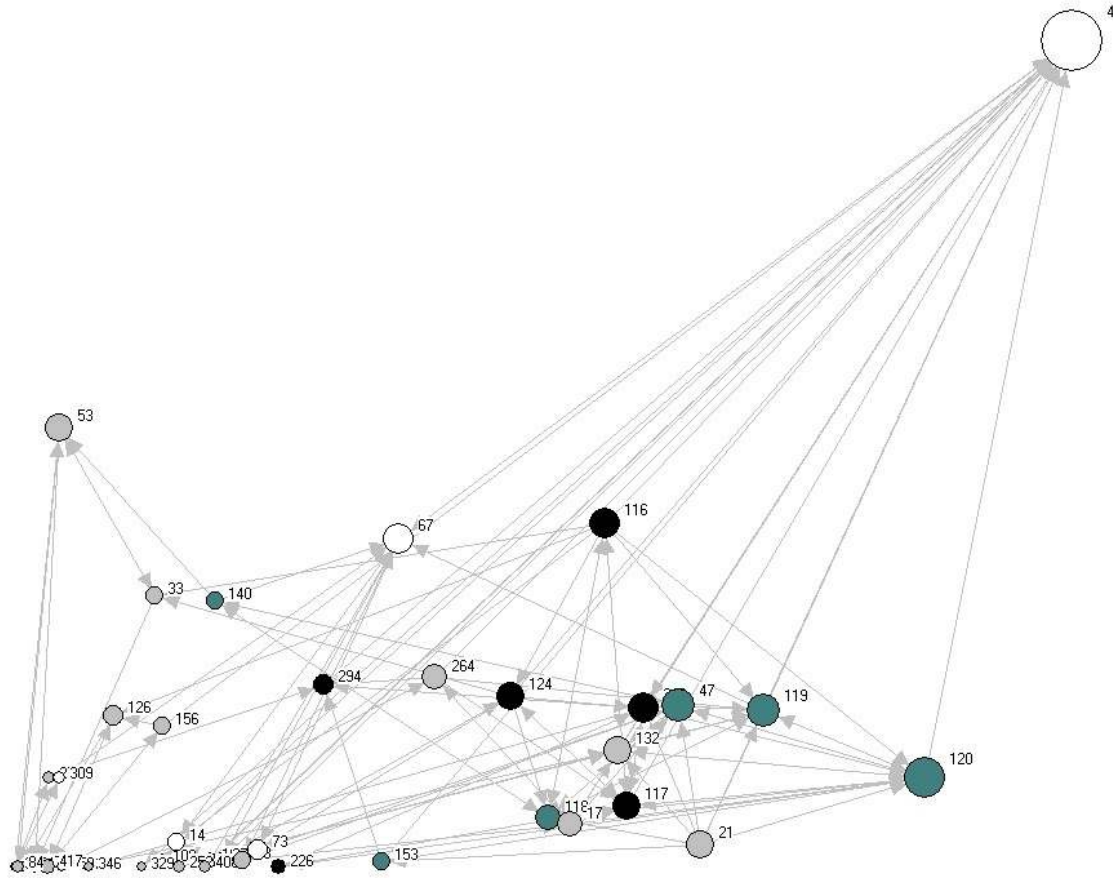
The SNA data supports the view that WSIS-civil society was part of a transnational policy network (TPN), and that civil society advocacy groups within that TPN were led and structurally dominated by CRIS-related actors. But it shows that it was the Association for Progressive Communications, a campaign member, not the CRIS Campaign organization per se, which dominated the centrality measures, at least in Phase 2 of WSIS.

The 15 most central actors (using eigenvector and degree measures of centrality) are shown in Table 2, along with some information about the issue-areas upon which their organization or advocacy is focused. Figure 3 displays this information graphically. Nodes are individual people, with position on the X axis reflecting eigenvector centrality, Y axis position reflecting betweenness, and the size of the node reflecting degree centrality.

**Table 2: Centrality of Individual Actors by Eigenvector**

ID of Actor	Centrality Measure (Rank)		Issues	Region	CRIS
	Eigenvector	Degree			
4	57.02 (1)	41.67 (1)	Dev; Gen; Priv; IntGov; RTC	EU	Yes
120	49.14 (2)	25.00 (2)	IntGov	EU	No
119	40.41 (3)	20.83 (3)	IntGov	AP	No
21	37.01 (4)	16.67 (5)	UN; Tele	EU	No
47	35.92 (5)	20.83 (3)	IntGov; UN	EU	No
218	34.12 (6)	18.75 (4)	HR	EU	No
117	33.12 (7)	16.67 (5)	Priv; IPR	EU	No
132	32.64 (8)	16.67 (5)	IntGov	AP	No
116	32.02 (9)	18.75 (4)	Priv; IntGov	NA	No
17	30.19 (10)	14.58 (6)	UN	EU	No
118	28.87 (11)	14.58 (6)	IntGov; Tele	NA	No
124	26.92 (12)	16.67 (5)	Priv; UN	NA	No
264	22.76 (13)	14.58 (6)	UN	NA	No
67	20.85 (14)	18.75 (4)	RTC	EU	Yes
153	19.88 (15)	08.33 (7)	IntGov	EU	No

Issue legend: Dev = ICTs for Development; Gen = Gender; Priv = Privacy; IntGov = Internet Governance and ICANN; RTC = Communication Rights; UN = UN process and reform; Tele = Telecommunications policy.

**Figure 3. Interpersonal Network of WSIS Civil Society**

Node sizes reflect degree centrality. Position on X axis reflects eigenvector centrality. Position on Y axis reflects betweenness. Color coding of nodes: white = CRIS-affiliated actor; black = actors associated with human rights/civil liberties organizations; blue-green = actors associated with ICANN/Internet governance; gray = all other issue networks.

Table 2 and Figure 3 reveal a clear hierarchy to the network: one actor, (#4, Karen Banks)<sup>41</sup> emerges as the hub of the WSIS-CS network. Banks had the highest scores in all three centrality measures (eigenvector, degree and betweenness). Note also that Banks' organization, APC, covers the broadest range of issues – a fact we think is correlated with her centrality. The measures also show that the WSIS-CS network was Euro-centered, with 7 of the 10 most central actors based in Europe. Geography still matters in transnational politics, even when it is conducted about and through the Internet.

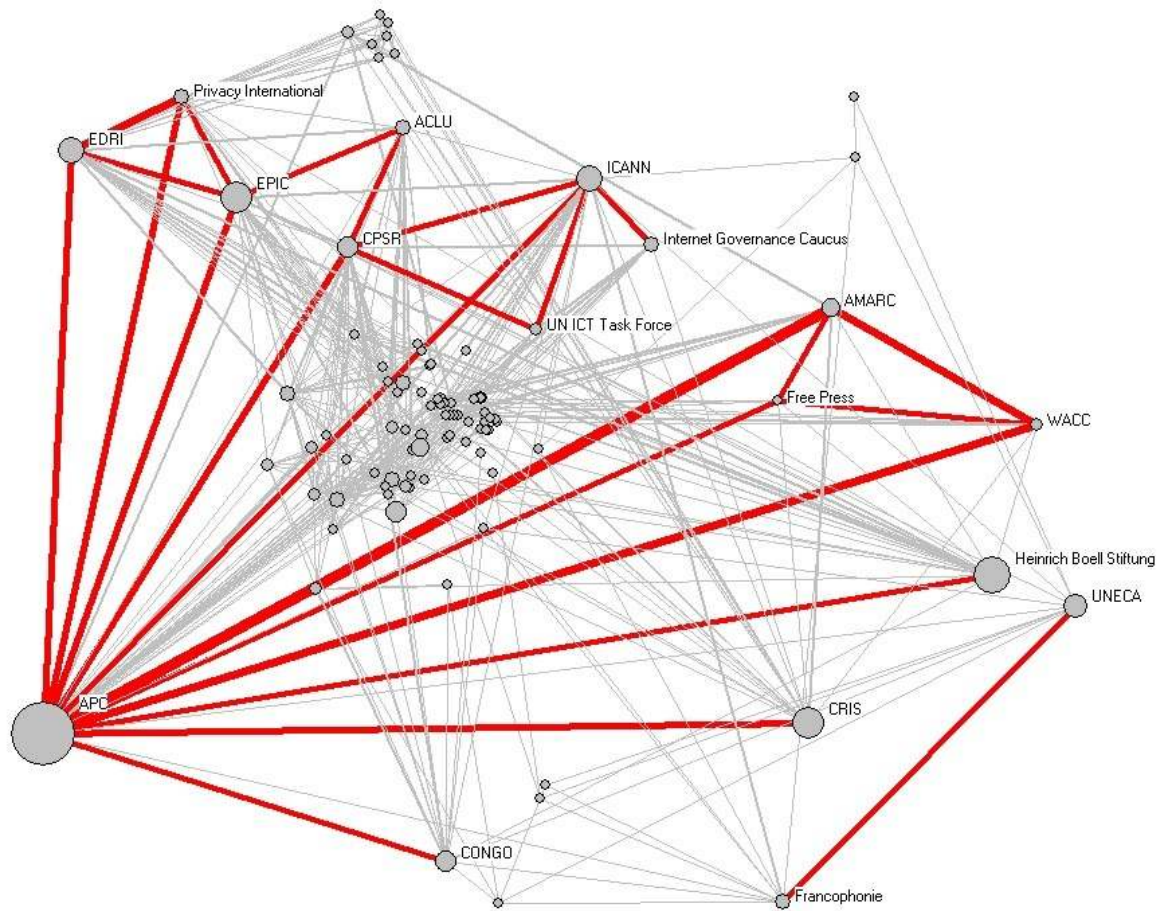
<sup>41</sup> Survey respondents were promised confidentiality; in Banks' case, the respondent agreed to let her name and organizational affiliation be revealed.





The network diagram has three distinct clusters. Cluster one, on the top of the diagram, is composed of civil society actors who are strongly associated with the media activism of the CRIS campaign and AMARC. These nodes are color-coded white. The cluster in the middle consists of actors involved with human rights and privacy organizations. These nodes are color-coded black. One of the common organizations linking them is the European Digital Rights Initiative (EDRI). The cluster on the lower right consists of actors associated with ICANN and Internet governance-related organizations. These nodes are color coded blue. The diagram shows that CRIS Campaign actors were more closely bound to each other through organizational affiliations in a distinct cluster. While there are some connections to the other issue networks, the gap between CRIS-affiliated and Internet governance-related actors and organizations is particularly evident.

**Figure 5. Organizations as Nodes; Actors as Links**



In Figure 5, nodes represent organizations and links represent individuals who cited the two organizations as ones they worked with closely. The resulting network diagram illustrates the extent to which an activist organization serves as a hub for individual interaction, facilitating the development of common ideas across issues addressed by the set of organizations active around those issues. Links are colored red to indicate that 3 or more individuals cited the same pair of organizations. Organizations are sized according to their betweenness score, which represents the extent to which an organization links other organizations in the overall network. By betweenness measures (and any other measure of centrality) APC is the organizational center of this particular advocacy network.

The network has a clear hub and spoke structure with APC at the hub; some organizational spokes, such as CONGO, CRIS or the Boell Foundation, are not densely connected to other organizations; others, such as the media activists associated with Free Press, AMARC, and World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), have strong horizontal ties among themselves. Like Figure 3, the network structure shows cleavages based on issue networks, with human rights, privacy and civil liberties advocates clustered, and somewhat interlinked with Internet governance advocates, and a significant divide between those issue networks and the media activists associated with AMARC, Free Press and WACC. Moreover, the ICT for development oriented organizations UNECA (U.N. Economic Commission for Africa) and Francophonie are connected strongly to each other but somewhat isolated from the other issue networks.

## 5. Conclusion

WSIS did not ratify *Communication Rights* as an ideology or as a specific set of entitlements. The term does not appear in the Civil Society Declaration, much less the official Declaration accepted by the governments. The conceptual problems alluded to in the discussion of ideology hampered its acceptance by many intellectuals involved and posed problems even for some of its adherents. Perhaps more importantly, the historical baggage it carried from the NWICO battles made the phrase "right to communicate" a clear target for ideological enemies of CRIS such as the World Press Freedom Committee.

In the formative stages of the transnational advocacy network, the tactical adoption of language drawn from RTC ideology did facilitate the advocacy network's ability to view communication-information policy as a unified policy domain susceptible to the demands of progressive advocacy groups. In the broader Transnational Policy Network, however, RTC proved to be a liability. The "communication rights" concept worked most effectively as a mobilizing frame when it became detached from its historical and communication-theory links and served as a kind of free-floating norm that papered over the differences between liberal-individualist and egalitarian policy norms. But once that happened, it lost most of its ability to offer concrete guidance to advocacy and the vacuum was filled by other, more traditional ideologies such as neo-Marxism.

In the end, it was the coupling of the *organizational capacity* of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) to the concept of a WSIS-centered campaign that had the most success in coordinating and connecting civil society in WSIS. APC achieved its centrality using the vague term "progressive" or generic terms such as "Internet rights" interchangeably with the term "communication

rights.” Although APC was one of the founders of the CRIS Campaign, its overwhelming dominance of the centrality measures had more to do with its long-term strategy of affiliating and working internationally with activists and groups focused on a wide variety of communication-information policy issues. APC’s network of affiliated organizations involves and incorporates actors from nearly all communication-information policy issues, and its network contains an unusual degree of technical knowledge about the Internet and telecommunication. APC have put particular emphasis on broadening access to ICTs in the developing world. But they were never just an ICT4D group; they also promoted free expression rights, privacy rights and gender equality as well. And unlike other CRIS-related groups they did not ignore or avoid Internet governance because of the unfamiliar and technical nature of the institutions and issues, but became involved in ICANN civil society fairly early on. Thus, when the WSIS debates shifted toward Internet governance APC alone was well prepared to handle it. That flexibility and scope, coupled with the facilitation and organizing skills of APC’s professional staff, accounts for its centrality and influence.

The civil society mobilization spearheaded by CRIS can claim a number of accomplishments. The production of the Civil Society Declaration afforded the progressive TAN a kind of ideological hegemony over the norms advocated by civil society. This kind of normative advocacy, of course, cannot have a direct and immediate impact on the willingness of governments and businesses to open their wallets to fund substantive policy demands. Over the long term, however, such norms do seem to establish a drift or direction that guides policy. At a more concrete level, there were clear indications that civil society advocacy had some influence on the substance of the official statement (Kleinwachter, 2004). The CRIS campaign also impacted other processes outside WSIS, most notably the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, the World Social Forum and some of the Latin and Central American free trade agreements.

The most significant accomplishment of the WSIS mobilization, however, was its advancement of the concept of multi-stakeholder – MuSH – governance. By setting aside (and yet capitalizing on) street-level protest/confrontation and demanding full-fledged participation, the civil society mobilization had a lasting effect on the Internet governance debates. Drawing on the already attenuated governmental role of ICANN-related institutions, civil society participated as a peer in the Working Group on Internet Governance and dominated its substantive output. This experience paved the way for a new U.N. process, the Internet Governance Forum, which has in turn institutionalized MuSH governance and kept alive many of the caucuses and thematic groups of WSIS civil society.

But MuSH governance raises many unresolved institutional issues. With its emphasis on open and transparent process, deliberative interactions among “stakeholders,” and the pressure of global norms and public opinion, the link between civil society participation, MuSH governance, a “democratic public sphere” or pluralist notions of democracy should be evident. Detractors on the other hand question the ability of self-selected NGOs to represent anyone, and compare “public-private partnerships” and its categorical assignment of representational roles to corporatism (Ottaway, 2001). The capacity of global civil society to shape global governance is obviously dependent on the resources of the economies from which its members come. Consequently, global civil society is dominated by North American and European groups regardless of how persistently and sincerely its members express support and concern for the “global South.” It is clear that at the global level ideals of “democratic” communication – or democratic anything – are not very meaningful until and unless the advocates of democracy are able to propose and enact

institutional mechanisms that can facilitate deliberation, aggregate preferences, formulate norms and rules, elect and depose legitimate representatives at a global level.

The limitations of multi-stakeholderism, however, should not blind us to the tremendous value of the increased participation and opportunities for mobilization it creates. There is no doubt that WSIS was a more substantive, inclusive and meaningful exercise in global governance because of the civil society mobilization pioneered by CRIS and managed so impressively by APC. This energy needs to find an appropriate channel.

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## Appendix 1

### Cees Hamelink's Proposed Universal Declaration on the Right to Communicate

#### INFORMATION RIGHTS such as:

- The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- The right to hold opinions.
- The right to express opinions without interference by public or private parties.
- The right of people to be properly informed about matters of public interest.
- The right of access to information on matters of public interest (held by public or private sources).
- The right to access public means of distributing information, ideas and opinions.

#### CULTURAL RIGHTS such as:

- The right to promote and preserve cultural diversity.
- The right to freely participate in the cultural life of one's community.
- The right to practise cultural traditions.
- The right to enjoy the arts and the benefits of scientific progress and its applications.
- The right to the protection of national and international cultural property and heritage.

- The right to artistic, literary and academic creativity and independence.
- The right to use one's language in private and public.
- The right of minorities and indigenous people to education and to establish their own media.

**PROTECTION RIGHTS such as:**

- The right of people to be protected against interference with their privacy by the media of mass communication, or by public and private agencies involved with data collections.
- The protection of people's private communications against interference by public or private parties.
- The right to respect for the standard of due process in forms of public communication.
- The right of protection against forms of communication that are discriminatory in terms of race, color, sex, language, religion or social origin
- The right to be protected against misleading and distorted information.
- The right of protection against the systematic and intentional propagation of the belief that individuals and/or social groups deserve to be eliminated.
- The right of the protection of the professional independence of employees of public or private communication agencies against the interference by owners and managers of these institutions.

**COLLECTIVE RIGHTS such as:**

- The right of access to public communication for communities.
- The right to the development of communication infrastructures, to the procurement of adequate resources, the sharing of knowledge and skills, the equality of economic opportunities, and the correction of inequalities.
- The right of recognition that knowledge resources are often a common good owned by a collective.
- The right of protection of such resources against their private appropriation by knowledge industries.

**\* PARTICIPATION RIGHTS such as:**

- The right to acquire the skills necessary to participate fully in public communication.
- The right to people's participation in public decision making on the provision of information, the production of culture or the production and application of knowledge.
- The right to people's participation in public decision making on the choice, development and application of communication technology."