

Communication Rights (and Wrongs) in the "Information Society"

Strategic Civil Society Agendas for WSIS



A.G. Alegre/Foundation for Media Alternatives

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Starting Points

“Blurred Vision”: multi-stakeholder nature naturally converges different interests, contexts, paradigms

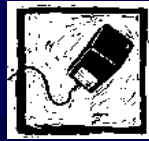
- important to civil society to pin down underlying vision of the “information society”
- Depending on what vision what starts from > goals, strategies, plans will follow
- Clarify the “lens” we have: paradigms



Starting Points

"Information Society":

- Popular paradigm: Technology as "driver"; stress on the "digital" realm (e.g. 'digital divide'), stress on "universal access"
- Valid, but civil society paradigm is broader:
 - New STAGE of information society;
 - Role of Technology: but it is not neutral
 - Digital divide: expression of existing social divides
 - Primacy of the human and social dimension



Starting Points

Communication Rights

- Right to Information/Right to Communicate: basic human rights > FOUNDATIONAL
- Means to enhance human rights; strengthen social, economic and cultural lives of people and communities
- CRIS Campaign (est. Oct. 2001)



Major Issues and Concerns

Social Divides in Info & Comm > Affordable
Access and Effective Use

Censorship; Surveillance > Right to Privacy;
Freedom of Expression

Concentration of Ownership and Control of
Media/ICT Resources > Democratization
of Media; Accountable, Transparent and
Democratic Governance



Major Issues and Concerns

Cultural Homogenization > Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Gender Blindness/Invisibility > Gender Justice/Equity

Working Agenda for Civil Society:

("Songs in the Key of C")

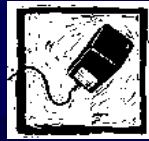
COMMUNITY

Connectivity & Access

Content

Capacities

Consensus



Agenda for Civil Society

- Connectivity:** access and equity to communications resources (frequency, channels, bandwidth, infra)
- Telecenters/ community access centers
 - Community broadcast media (esp. community radio)
 - Affordable telecoms pricing (e.g. voip, wireless)



Agenda for Civil Society

- **Content**: appropriate, relevant, value-driven, strategic (e.g., local views, culture, & commerce; best practices, etc.)
 - Local Indigenous knowledge; IPR
 - Language/multilingual content
 - Freedom of expression: censorship
 - Specific stakeholders: women, youth, ip's, etc
 - Appropriate applications; Open Source/Content



Agenda for Civil Society

- **Capacities/Competencies:**
building human skills
 - Education and Training
 - ICT Literacy and HRD
 - Learning/Knowledge Networking
 - Formal educational system + Adult education



Agenda for Civil Society

- **Consensus**: principled partnerships between stakeholders
 - Governance (e.g., ICANN)
 - Multi-stakeholder policy development: local, national, regional, global
 - Participation and inclusion

Within civil society; CS with other development stakeholders

Socializing Info & Communications

- Information and communication inequities rooted in **social inequities**;
- Struggle to democratize information and promote communication rights is not a technical issue but a **political one**
 - Control over **resources**
 - Control over **citizens**
 - Control over **agendas**

From “**Information Economy**” to a
“**Communicative Society/Societies**”