

THE PROBLEM OF **THE INFORMATION FORMAT** (FOR NETWORKS)

Proceedings of the Issue Mapping workshop

by the Govcom.org Foundation, Amsterdam

Hosted by the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Cartagena, Colombia,
with support from the Open Society Institute, Budapest.

28-31 October 2003

Prepared by Dr. Richard Rogers
with the help of all participants

29 February 2004

Table of Contents

Preface	ii
The information format as a problem (for networks)	1
Introduction: The old media format	1
What do new media networks do with old media?	5
Formats for networks	7
1. The network and the press release: APC's statement on the downing of the <i>Al-jazeera</i> Web site	7
Calendrical and terminological formatting work for (issue) networks	12
Contrasting networks and movements (through anti-war efforts)	15
2. Is APC a social network or an issue network?	18
3. The hybridization of ICT at WSIS: Opening up the issue of ICT to development, gender and rights.	24
4. 'e-formatting'. Is e-governance a women's issue?	28
5. From sustainable development around the world, to a sustainable Colombian network.	32
6. Cancun. The missing middle, or is the United States the issue?	36
7. An issue-geographical reorganization of North-South from the South.	40
Appendix	41
Selected (Issue) Network Format	41
Project participant list	42
Literature	43
Acknowledgements	44

Preface

The Govcom.org Foundation organized a workshop on the occasion of the annual gathering of the members of the Association for Progressive Communications at Hotel Caribe, Cartagena, Colombia, 28-31 October 2003, with generous support from the Open Society Institute, Budapest.

“The Problem of Information Formats (for networks)” has been dedicated to understanding how an organization approaches a network with information. ‘New media’ networks differ from the press, TV and radio, where the formats are more established. You send a press release, a video can or a sound bite. You organise a scripted event, and invite journalists.

But what do you send to a network? Does one send information in the ‘old media’ formats? What does a network do with a press release?

Generally, we are interested in learning how networks deal with information formats. Are certain formats routinely filed away or deleted, whilst others tend to circulate in networks?

The workshop has treated formats broadly, and also made distinctions between various kinds of networks – social networks, issue networks and stranger networks. The purpose has been to understand how different formats operate in various types of networks. In particular, we are interested in which formats organize networks. What is accomplished in network terms if the United Nations declares a ‘day’ on its calendar to your issue?

The report provides an introduction to some of the arguments about how to approach the problem of information formats (for networks). Subsequently, it describes each of the projects undertaken at the workshop, including the data collected, the methods employed and the results eventually found. It also contains the info-graphics created during the workshop that aid in telling the stories in our final presentation, “The Problem of Information Formats (for networks).”

Richard Rogers
Amsterdam, 29 February 2004

THE INFORMATION FORMAT AS A PROBLEM (FOR NETWORKS)

Introduction: The old media format

Greenmediatoolshed.org runs an old media spamming machine (see figure one). It is a database system, rented from a meta-data company. It contains all the names, addresses, fax and phone numbers of the journalists working for newspapers and other media companies. NGOs that join the Green Media Tool Shed receive access to the database, and its accompanying machine. The machine accepts press releases and other inputs, and allows the user to select the destinations for it. Press send, and one NGO statement is underway to many journalists.

Include	Contact Name	Contact Title	Outlet Name (A)	Contact Address Line 1	Contact City	Contact State	Contact Phone Number	Contact
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Avers, Scott	Reporter	Bellingham Herald	1155 North State Street	Bellingham	WA	(360) 676-2620	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Robinson, Erik	Staff Writer	Columbian, The	701 West 8th Street	Vancouver	WA	(360) 699-6006	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Podsada, Janice	Environmental Writer	Daily Herald	1213 California Street	Everett	WA	(425) 339-3029	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jankowski, Susan	Environmental Editor	Daily Journal Of Commerce	83 Columbia Street	Seattle	WA	(206) 622-8272	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Miller, Scott	Reporter	KING-TV	333 Dexter Avenue, North	Seattle	WA	(206) 448-3864	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lyman, Francesca	Your Environment Columnist	MSNBC.com	11819 73rd Place NE	Kirkland	WA	(425) 823-5127	Consume
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dodge, John	Environment Editor	Olympian	111 Bethel Street, NE	Olympia	WA	(360) 754-5420	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Meisner, Jeff	Staff Writer	Puget Sound Business Journal	12011 Northeast 1st Street	Bellevue	WA	(425) 455-9734	114 Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wilhelm, Steve	Staff Writer	Puget Sound Business Journal	720 3rd Avenue	Seattle	WA	(206) 447-8505	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Payne, Jon	Publisher	Radwaste Magazine	1175 Adair Dr	Richland	WA	(708) 579-8227	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Liebman, Larry	Editor/Publisher	Saving Energy	5411 117th Avenue, SE	Bellevue	WA	(425) 643-4248	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	McClure, Robert	Reporter	Seattle Post-Intelligencer	101 Elliot Avenue West	Seattle	WA	(206) 448-8092	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Taylor, Rob	Reporter	Seattle Post-Intelligencer	101 Elliot Avenue West	Seattle	WA	(206) 448-8303	Environme
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Anderson, Ross	Staff Reporter	Seattle Times	1120 John Street	Seattle	WA	(206) 464-2200	Environme

Figure one. Green Media Tool Shed. Meta-data by Vocus Public Relations.

Currently the Green Media Tool Shed would like to make the information collected and inputted into it more grassroots-based, decoupling the project from the commercial meta-data. They would like NGOs around the United States to join, and to input and update the contact details of the journalists, including mobile phone numbers for short text messaging (SMS).

Whilst not their spoken intention, they also may desire to have the NGOs rate the journalists on a friendliness scale. They may wish to have the journalists ranked or red-starred for their willingness to write about NGOs and their issues, and also for their willingness to take over the NGO angle to the story more or less verbatim.

Should the future system keep the press releases that pass through it, analysis would be able to compare the machine inputs with the newspaper outputs. For example, one could query Google News for the NGO press release text and analyse its treatment across newspapers. With RSS channels automatically set to the newspapers that received the press release, one also could monitor NGO 'press sense' as well as newspaper 'cooperation', i.e., whether NGOs know how to 'play the media', whether journalists are taking up the story at all, paraphrasing NGO text, or even passing it on verbatim in the printed newspaper.

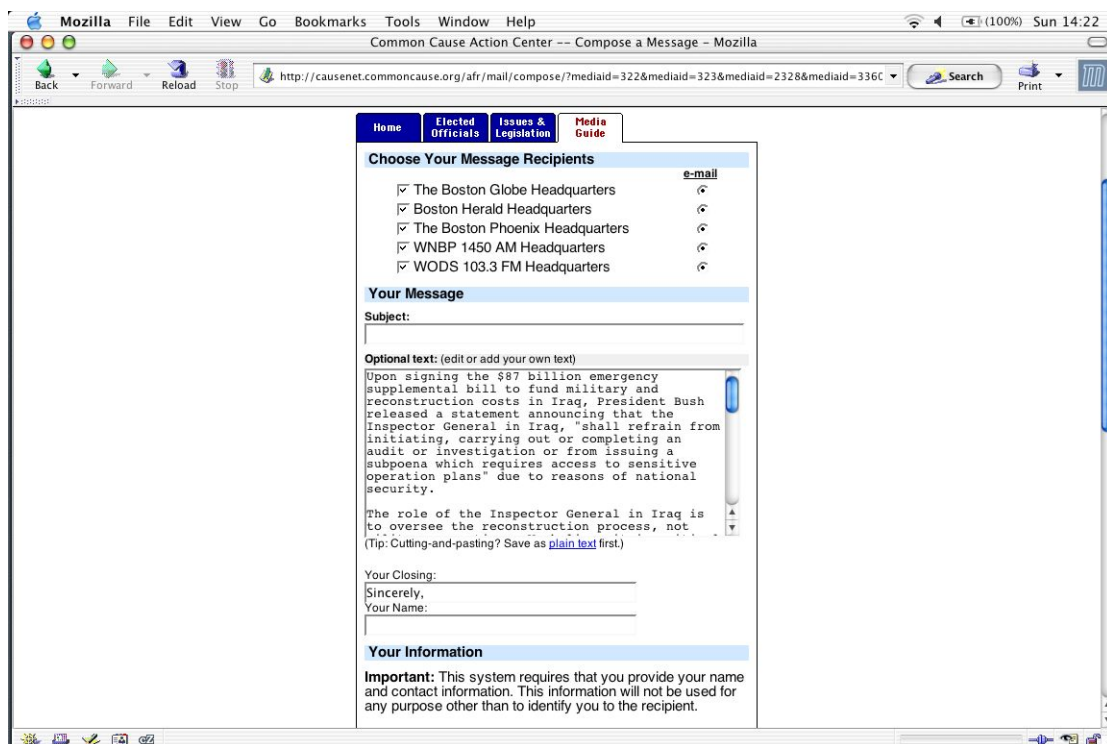


Figure two. Common Cause Action Center, a second example of systems using old media formats.

On the basis of the brief description above, both the means as well as the purposes of dealing with old media appear fairly established. There is a chosen format for sending information to old media (press release), and there is a way of measuring 'effectiveness,' i.e., getting (friendly) press.

If such a system were built for communications to Internet-based networks (instead of to old media organs), what would it look like? Which inputs would it take, and which outputs would it generate? What would be the chosen formats for sending information, and what would be the means of measuring 'effectiveness'?

In new media the information formats for network communication are less established. What do you send to a network? There are some conventions that lead to questions about the network communication styles of choice. Does one send the same formats as with 'old media' (e.g., a press release)? If so, does one send it bulk-ish, to subscriber lists, with the press release in the body of the message? (When does one hide the recipient list?) Should the press release be a PDF attachment so that the information is like an old media 'document' that is portable but not electronically editable, without effort? (Many NGOs would answer that question in the negative, for a PDF cannot be re-purposed through copy and paste.) Is email to be used as an alerting system that contains a URL pointer to the press release? Should email provide pointers to fill out an online questionnaire, or to sign a petition? Or should the petition and the questionnaire be placed in the body of the message, with a request to return to sender? Should the request for signatures be viral, allowed to circulate unfettered, and one day return? Once the petition and the questionnaire are sent, would the percentage of signatories and returned questionnaires be the means to measure effectiveness? What do to with the viral variety? If people you know in your network have heard about it, is that enough?

How does one measure the network resonance of the various information types put into play by NGOs? In social science there are ready figures available for survey response rates. These are ways to measure how well your survey has done.

Mailed questionnaires seldom generate response rates higher than 30% for individual surveys, and 50% for organizational ones. Face-to-face interviews easily reach response rates of 60 to 70%, and telephone interviews finish somewhat lower, at 50 to 60%.¹

But network interaction among NGOs (and related actors) in new media may be sufficiently distinctive to discount the value of ready comparisons with standard response rates for surveys undertaken through the post, the telephone call and the appointment for a face-to-face interview. It may not make sense to import these figures for comparisons to network-responder activities (also with the aim of measuring 'effectiveness').

In the event, NGOs deal with these micro-formatting questions on a daily basis. Through a routine culture of information sharing in 'networks', they have developed not quite standards but conventions.

We would like to treat some of these questions about formats through an inquiry into the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), an important NGO network. How does APC format its information for its networks. Which formats do they use, and when? How do they know whether they circulate, whether they are effective?

To date there are no dedicated new media spamming machines per se. In contrast to old media (and to the case of the Green Media Tool Shed and the meta-data company it relies

¹ Bert Klandermans and Jackie Smith, "Survey Research: A Case for Comparative Designs," in *Methods of Social Movement Research*, eds. Bert Klandermans and Suzanne Staggenborg. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 9.

on), media machines for the explicit purpose of circulating particular formats in networks have yet to be produced. To date, automated network communication machines, with effectiveness measures, are not routinely employed. Email is used.

This piece describes the methods and machines employed, first, to *capture* the new media networks, and query them for reactions to particular formats. How do networks deal with particular formats? It leaves the question of a new media spamming machine to further inquiry.

What do new media networks do with old media?

The term format most readily connotes the form of a production, and traditionally the form is distinct from the content. New media is particularly interesting in this regard, for historically there has been only form, and requests for content. URLs are reserved, databases await data, and content management systems await content. Sites need 'filling in'.

Additionally, new media has been held up as an area where the form/content distinction collapses most spectacularly through practice. No data can be unformatted; data can be reformatted only. There are only friendlier formats promising more compatibility.

Seeing the world through friendly and less friendly formats may be one means to come to grips with networks and how they operate with new media.

The undertaking thus far has been to contrast the relative stability of old media formats (and the machines that may be made to circulate them) with the relative novelty of new media formats, inquiring into which machines may be devised to circulate them. (We are interested in ways for these new machines to measure the effectiveness of new media formats in networks, too.) One may understand a new media machine, thus, as a device that circulates friendly formats to networks, and also understands what the recipients have done with the format.

Which formats are friendly? Is a friendly format that which is liable to be passed on? Is the level of circulation of formats – passing it on – the means to measure effectiveness?

Even if we discover friendly formats that are more likely to be passed on, do new media networks revolve around them? More radically, may the formats themselves organize networks?

In the work recently undertaken into formats circulating in networks, we have made a few observations. First, new media networks employ old media formats (but not only). If we were to judge effectiveness in terms of 'pure' message transfer (as we would in old media, using journalist spamming machines and subsequent Google News analysis), the NGOs do extraordinarily 'well' in their networks. Networks circulate press releases and such by 'forwarding' or re-announcing.

The NGOs circulate them, however, without the care to the 'content' that old media may take. There is less editing, and more verbatim transfer. By old media journalistic standards, the networks thus react *worse* to old media formats in another sense, too. Intervening events that would change the nature of the message may go unnoticed, as the network keeps forwarding them along. This would be one of the less beneficial sides to 'viral' messaging, so-called, or the passing-it-on style. The finding is also in keeping with how computer viruses continue to circulate on the Internet months and months after the antidote has been announced, and software programs patched or auto-updated. The point is that these viruses circulate *unaffected*. The information is available to detect the virus (and stop its execution), but the virus continues to circulate in networks unchanged.

But the analogy with viruses ends there. NGO networks are not merely (socio-technical) infrastructure that 'hosts' circulation of whatever is sent to it. Rather, particular formats may prompt particular network behaviours.

In particular, we have found that there are distinctive network behaviours for particular formats. In receiving a press release, for example, the networks accord the old media format a similar, short attention span as one would suspect in the old media situation – in newspaper reading and article spreading. Once the message has arrived, network actors appear to delete them or stop passing them along in a similar way as one would throw out the daily newspaper, or send someone an article from it.²

Other network formats live longer, richer lives. Besides the press release and others like that, we inquire into formats put into play by networks that may not resemble old media. What are the network lives led by the 'tool', the 'training module', the 'call for participation' in the summit or parallel event?

Once we have some understanding of how networks treat particular formats, there is a more important question about 'format work'. The crucial question is whether formats have to do with the organization of networks, whether formats may make networks. Putting forward the idea that formats may organize networks is also to say that networks may not exist independent of the formats that keep them together.

² Online newspapers trade on this short attention span, allowing reading and transfer of the newspaper on its day of publication, and perhaps one day after publication date. But it charges people with a memory. If you would like to read a newspaper article published three days ago, or send it along, you are charged.

FORMATS FOR NETWORKS

1. The Network and the Press Release: APC's statement on the downing of the *Al-Jazeera* Web site.

We introduce the research into formats with an example of the rich format work of a network actor. Thereafter we discuss two cases, inquiring into how the formats circulate in networks.

The Association for Progressive Communications, for example, use the following means to communicate with its network.

```
Delivered-To: apcnews@mailman.greennet.org.uk
From: Karen Higgs <khiggs@apc.org>
Organization: Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
X-Accept-Language: en
To: APC Forum <apc.forum@lists.apc.org>, APCNews list <apcnews@lists.apc.org>, APC
Press <apc.press@lists.apc.org>
Subject: [APCNews] Announcing the APC Annual Report
Please circulate. Apologies for cross-posting.
```

```
=====
APC's Latest Annual Report: Strategic use of ICTs by civil society and engaging civil society in
ICT policy
```

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa, October 6 2003 -- In the course of 2002 APC focused its energies primarily in two areas - strategic use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) by civil society and engaging civil society in ICT policy processes. The use of ICTs by civil society has been central to APC since our founding and we have been working on ICT policy issues since 2000 when APC members identified ensuring internet rights for civil society as a priority. But in 2002 we started to delve beneath the surface of the challenges our communities confront and instead of responding to the symptoms, find ways to help civil society anticipate and plan for the challenges in their policy environment at home or in their use of ICTs in their workplace.

Highlights covered in the 2002 APC annual report include: APC in the run-up to the first-ever United Nations summit on the information society (WSIS), the APC ICT policy monitors in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, a new training course helped civil society organisations understand how ICT policy decisions affect their work, the Africa Hafkin Prize recognised people-centred ICT policy initiatives, tools development included a free software content management system and piloting in four continents of the Gender Evaluation Methodology for ICT and internet initiatives (GEM).

And achievements from APC members on five continents such as:
- IN-EA, Kenya: Information for drought preparedness

- BlueLink, Bulgaria: Electronic networking begins in a war-torn province as BlueLink builds bridges in Kosova/o
- Fantsuam Foundation: Local health content in Nigeria blends tradition and science
- Tau, Argentina: Non-profits and solidarity groups under pressure in Argentina's second city create an alternative information exchange
- Jinbonet, South Korea: Campaign against the revision of South Korean copyright law

Download the APC Annual Report 2002 from <http://www.apc.org/books>. The report will be available shortly in Spanish.

(The annual report is in PDF.) But file formats and email communication protocols (with their opportunities for measuring effectiveness through download counts and other means) are only the beginning of the inquiry into information formats. Announced as well are other formats for the network: 'participation' in a summit, 'policy monitors', a 'training course', a 'prize', 'tools', a 'methodology' and 'membership' (announcement).

This set of items is particular to APC, though APC, as a highly professional and socialized network actor, has designed initiatives that are meant to circulate, both to its members as well as to other close or more remote network actors, including inter-governmental organizations and funders. As such the initiatives may be taken as network inputs for network circulation.

In our work we looked, first, into a particular old media format APC put into play: the press release. The press release concerned APC's reactions to the downing of the Al-Jazeera English-language Web site. Subsequently, we enquired into the circulation of a prize (announcement). Apart from measuring the formats' circulation (and developing rudimentary methods to do so), we would like to know whether such initiatives organize networks (and which kinds).

On 24 March 2003 Al-Jazeera launched its English-language aljazeera.net. The next day the Qatar-based TV station (and Web site hosted in the U.S.) released pictures of American war prisoners. The site was hit heavily; one of Al-Jazeera's spokesmen spoke of a distributed denial of service attack (DDoS). The site was repeatedly defaced with American patriotic matter. There were other reactions, too. For example, Al-Jazeera reporters were asked to leave the New York Stock Exchange.

On 4 April the APC issued a 'press release' (in English), later followed by versions in Spanish and French. The header and the first two paragraphs read:

Statement by APC Opposing Actions Against the Online Presence of Middle East News Agency, Al-Jazeera

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay – APC opposes actions against the online presence of Al-Jazeera. The Internet must be allowed to freely perform its unique and vital role as a promoter of "freedom of expression" and content diversity, especially in times of conflict.

APC opposes censorship on the Internet and states in its Internet Rights Charter^[1] that "the Internet must be protected from all attempts to censor social and political debate". The Internet Rights Charter argues that "the Internet is an ideal space for the recording and promotion of culturally and politically diverse content".

According to Karen Higgs at the APC, the press release (or statement) was sent to the 1,300 email addresses from three APC lists: APC Forum <apc.forum@lists.apc.org>, APCNews list <apcnews@lists.apc.org>, and APC Press <apc.press@lists.apc.org>. After a request to the members for an endorsement, 18 members complied:

APC Members that endorsed the APC press release about aljazeera.net, 4 April 2003.

LaborNet, USA - www.labornet.org
Jinbonet, South Korea - www.jinbo.net
TAU, Argentina - www.tau.org.ar
Wamani, Argentina - www.wamani.org.ar
ComLink, Germany - www.comlink.org
GreenNet, UK - www.gn.apc.org
APC Women's Programme (APC WNSP) - www.apcwomen.org
Institute for Global Communications (IGC), USA - www.igc.org
Fantsuam Foundation, Nigeria - www.fantsuam.com
ChangeNet, Slovakia - www.changenet.sk
RITS, Brazil - www.rits.org.br
LaNeta, Mexico - www.laneta.apc.org
Colnodo, Colombia - www.colnodo.apc.org
Third World Institute (ITeM), Uruguay - www.chasque.apc.org
Pangea, Spain - www.pangea.org
Econnect, Czech Republic - www.ecn.cz
StrawberryNet, Romania - www.sbn.ro
c2o, Australia - www.c2o.org
BlueLink, Bulgaria - www.bluelink.net

To ascertain what happened to the press release (in terms of its circulation in and beyond the various APC networks), researchers queried a series of search engines (Google, Altavista, Alexa, Alltheweb) for this string: *Internet must be allowed to freely perform its unique and vital role*. We looked at the organizations returned in the engine results, and the posting dates of their pages (according the search engines), in an effort to ascertain the extent of its circulation. In particular we were interested in the life of the press release around and beyond the event. We also concerned ourselves with whether the press release organized a network, however temporarily.

Networks are divided in this inquiry into social, issue and stranger networks - into those actors one would consider to be in one's broader social network, those NGO and intergovernmental actors formally working on the issue and those outside that known and specific issue-professionalised sphere - 'strangers' who may or may not be working directly on the issue (of media freedom, in this case).

In terms of its resonance in known networks, the press release was picked up and reformatted by about one-third of the members of APC's network. (The release was translated into an additional 3 languages -Brazilian Portuguese, Slovak and Japanese. The translation into Slovak does not appear to have been picked up by other online publications beyond use by APC's own member in the Czech Republic.)

Beyond the APC network, the following known actors picked up or cited the press release.

Actors, known by the APC, who cited the APC's press release about aljazeera.net, 4 April 2003.

www.arabdev.org
www.labornetjp.org
www.crisinfo.org
www.comminit.com
www.kubatana.net
www.ctrlaltesc.org
www.cidadania.org.br
www.isiswomen.org
www.wsisasia.org
www.fma.ph
www.jca.apc.org
www.fitug.de/atlarge-discuss/0304/msg00197.html
www.bbc.co.uk
www.oneworld.net
www.ipsnews.net

These actors may be characterised as known issue-oriented NGOs and media, without the intergovernmental component. The BBC Online and IPS were the only larger formal media organizations that picked up the story; Oneworld is the NGO news aggregator. All are said to be part of the APC 'press network'.

The following actors are not personally known, and picked up or cited it. (Because they are unknown, they have longer URLs.)

Actors, not personally known by the APC, who cited the APC press release concerning aljazeera.net, 4 April 2003

groups.yahoo.com/group/bangla_ict/ (Bangladesh ICT Group)
lists.jammed.com/politech/2003/03/0081.html (D. McCullagh)
mail.sarai.net/pipermail/reader-list/ (Sarai)
nuke.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/ (Argentine Gov't Human Rights)
paris.indymedia.org/article.php3?id_article=2598
switzerland.indymedia.org/fr/2003/05/8619.shtml
www.cyberdyaryo.com/features/f2003_0411_01.htm (Philippine media freedom group)
www.e-leusis.net/noticia.asp?id_noticia=786 (Spanish women's portal)
www.flora.org/nowar/forum/old-2448 (Anti-war list)

www.goanet.org/pipermail/goanet/2003-April/001083.html (Latin Cyberfeminists)
 www.hro.org/editions/alert/7-3/15.htm (Russian GILC)
 www.laborbeat.org/3/uppnet_spr03.pdf (U.S. Labour Union Producers and Programmers)
 www.lafil.org/ (French media freedom group)

We found that the press statement on Al-Jazeera was picked up by strangers, although almost all are perhaps one degree of separation from APC members. (Collectively, they had 'heard' of all of them.) We found quotes and references from a freedom of expression group from Russia (a branch of GILC), a list of journalists from Southern India (de Waag's Sarai), an information and technology group of some 2000 Bangladeshis (using Yahoo groups), a Spanish women's portal, the Swiss and Paris Indymedia and a quarterly newsletter from a trade union from Minneapolis, USA. It was the 'most read article on information rights' in the online library of the Argentine governments' Secretariat on Human Rights secretariat. (The APC researcher was pleased with this finding.) It also provided the single penetration of the governmental space.

In terms of circulation, significantly, we found that it resonated and moved about in the first 10 days after the press release. The network treated the press release with the attention span normally accorded to it. We noticed a familiar 'press attention bell-curve'.

Network resonance of APC press release concerning aljazeera.net, 4 April 2003.	
<i>Date</i>	<i>Network Mentionings</i>
April 4	3
April 5	5
April 6	8
April 7	4
April 8	3
April 9	3
April 10	2

The press release also was taken up verbatim by most of the sources; it was packaged and ready to go. It was precisely this verbatim circulation that led us back to our thoughts about old media, about its standard formats (press releases), and about the means by which we may judge its effectiveness – verbatim use of the press release in the story. The networks were extremely friendly towards the press release for they took it over verbatim, and passed it on.

One observation troubled us. The press release circulated in a vacuum, in its own trajectory space, in the sense that its re-posters and re-purposers circulated the press release without adding the detail that the Al-Jazeera site went back up on 6 April. The 6th of April was the day when the press release about reactions to its downing was circulating the most. The network appeared too busy networking to add that piece of information to the formatted press release. The old media format circulated like a chain letter, without intervention by editors.

Finally, in October 2003, there was the first emergence of network memory, of a life beyond the specific story space. The language of the press release was picked up on a story about WSIS, where APC's characterisation of the Internet was put back into play. (APC is an active participant in the WSIS project. We return to this.)

Calendrical and terminological formatting work for (issue) networks

Because the press release did not appear to organize significant networks beyond the social, albeit with one indication of the potential emergence of an issue network, we would like to put forward some thoughts of how particular formats organize networks, by beginning with an illustrative story. In particular, we treat how terminological as well as calendrical work may organize 'issue networks'.

Some years ago we did a research project with a Croatian women's group, called B.a.B.e (Be active, Be emancipated). B.a.B.e was involved in organizing events surrounding "Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence". B.a.B.e. wanted to know whom to invite. They defined the ideal participants as those network actors (analytically and practically speaking) who remained together in the same space when inter-governmental actors (IGOs) and donors were removed. We devised a method to ascertain these 'authentic' actors, whose authenticity (to B.a.B.e.) was based on their independence from IGOs and donors, in network terms. We made a series of 'gender violence' actor-network maps, with the Issuecrawler software, where the two most significant ones were a) map of gender violence activists, IGOs and donors; and b) map of gender violence activists, without IGOs and donors. Among other things, we found that the Croatian group as well as the women's group in the United States (based at Rutgers University, and initiators of sixteen days) fit the description.³

Whilst doing the research, one researcher also became particularly interested in how the groups had arrived at 'sixteen days', instead of the more conventional day, week, month, year, decade. It caught my eye largely because of my personal involvement in an unrelated calendrical moment, when at a science centers conference lunch in 1996 I found myself at the same table with the people who organize 'science week', 'science month' and 'science year'. (I asked if the 'science week' organizers were jealous of the 'science month' and 'science year' people, and also if they were interested in expanding their calendar to include those involved in longer timeframes. Which are the calendar formats attracted the finest audiences? Did that attraction have more, or less, to do with its name and duration?)

Where the gender violence calendrical work is concerned, arriving at 'sixteen days' was a network project. I would like to argue that sixteen days was an 'issue network' project – a formatting project to allow an issue network to configure around gender violence. But it is also a particular type of issue network. Because of existing 'days' on the international calendar as well as days not yet on the international calendar, it is also special (North-South) NGO network inclusivity work, an undertaking that the APC also generally practices. Here is how the sixteen days calendar is currently filled in, with the seminal beginning and ending dates, with two intervening dates that also require attention.

³ See also http://www.govcom.org/gco_projects/workshops/6/presentation/WN.html.

Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence – Key Dates

November 25 is the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This day commemorates the politically active Mirabal sisters who were brutally murdered by the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic in 1960.

December 1 is World AIDS Day. The twin pandemics of HIV and AIDs are decimating communities globally. Women are more susceptible to infection and are infected at a faster rate than men.

December 6 marks the anniversary of the 'Montreal Massacre', when a man shot and killed 14 women engineering students for "being feminists".

December 10 is recognised as International Human Rights Day. In 1948, on 10 December, governments acknowledged the human rights of all to "life, liberty and the security of person...without distinction of any kind," as they signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁴

I would like to provide some perspective of when each of these days became part of the larger 'sixteen days' calendar, and why (in issue network and other network terms).

In 1981 the 25th of November was declared "Day to End Violence against Women" by the first "Feminist Encuentro" for Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Bogota, Colombia (18-21 July). In 1991 the Rutgers University women's group (CWGL) reformatted the one day as "sixteen days", to make a bridge to the UN Human Rights Day on 10 December (a day in existence since 1950).⁵ It also brought World AIDS Day on 1 December and a 'lesser' day from an intergovernmental point of view into the fold. AIDS Day hales from 1988. A UN press kit summarises its purpose, in issue network terms (if we were to remove the reference to 'individuals everywhere').

The day was envisaged as an opportunity for governments, national AIDS programmes, non-governmental and local organizations, as well as individuals everywhere, to demonstrate both the importance they attached to the fight against AIDS and their solidarity in this effort.⁶

The 'lesser date', December 6th is the 'National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women', declared by the Canadian government in 1989.

Both 1 December and 6 December were named in a timely fashion (from the point of view of the founding of sixteen days, in 1991) and were also calendrically interesting. The other day in that period was considered less so, but may be in future. The 3^d of December is the

⁴ <http://www.womenaid.org/16days/english/intro.html>, accessed 21 December 2003.

⁵ <http://www.un.org/events/humanrights/background.html>, accessed 21 December 2003.

⁶ http://www.unaids.org/wac/2000/wad00/files/history_WAD.htm, accessed 21 December 2003.

International Day for the Disabled, but thus far falls outside the Sixteen Days calendar format.

In 1999 the UN finally followed the NGO's early calendar work by calling the 25th of November the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Symbolically and calendrically, it left no doubt about the UN's belonging in the issue network. It also points to how calendar work may organize networks consisting of activists, advocates, academics as well as inter-governmental organizations.

In terms of NGO formatting work for networks, 'Sixteen Days' is an effort to move the activists network into a more classic issue network configuration that would include the inter-governmentals, and eventually have the intergovernmentals include them. It is simultaneously a North-South (NGO network) unification effort, where South American murders by right-wing governmental paramilitaries as well as hate crime murders by lone, North American gunmen are unified in the same 'violence against women' issue space.

The meaning of the B.a.B.e authenticity research project occurred to me only later. B.a.B.e. wanted the event back into the hands of the activists, with IGOs (and donors) removed, or marginalised. The question implied by our small undertaking also may revolve around how to gain issue celebrity and issue urgency, whilst retaining grass-roots authenticity.

Sixteen Days was an important terminological formatting project. Women's Aid (writing in 2003) describes one of the problems before terminological standardisation.

Previously, 25 November was observed in Latin America and a growing number of other countries around the world as "International Day Against Violence Against Women". With no standard title, it was also referred to as "No Violence Against Women Day" and the "Day to End Violence Against Women".

The standardisation also changed the word 'women' to 'gender', making the issue space more expansive, inclusive (as well as academic). Violence against men and women of homosexual, bi-sexual and trans-sexual persuasion could be covered (and studied), as would transvestites, although this has been slow to develop in observed discursive practice.

The Sixteen Days, perhaps most importantly, provides a decent calendrical window for event organization. It is also potentially 'franchise-able', by which is meant that one can do it locally. One can download or even create 'kits', 'tool-boxes', 'methodologies' and other contributions to fill and contribute to the days (all of which are major NGO network formats). With them one can 'do' the event with local modifications and tools. The contributions also may become exportable to something much larger, in network terms. One can network locally, with the assurance that you are part of something much larger than yourself (which it already special). There is the added incentive that one's presence and well-known-ness can grow in network terms. Without relying on the news and the press, networks would distribute organizational celebrity through the circulation of the kits and the events made possible through franchising. In all, these are the formats that lead longer, richer lives in the new media, in 'issue network' terms.

The other format we analysed is the prize (or, more specifically, the prize announcement). One could discuss the Hafkin prize (announcement) as a geographical formatting activity in issue network terms. Its theme – ICT policy in Africa – fits with a focus in donor and inter-governmental circles, as Soros and others now expand their activities into the African space. The prize (announcement) is in keeping with that expansion, not only in the sense that APC, as an established actor in the African NGO issue space, would like to re-assert its presence in that space. But more importantly it desires perhaps to be the major player in the organization of new ICT-related issue networks that have to do with Africa.

The undertaking here, however, concerns whether the prize (announcement) is able to organize a third type of network, beyond the social and the issue. Building stranger networks may be described as the new media equivalent of ‘getting out the vote’, ‘building a social movement’, encouraging people ‘to join the demonstration’. The difference is that ‘strangers’ in network terms are more likely to be organizations than individuals. Thus stranger networks are not smart mobs.

Contrasting networks and movements (through anti-war efforts)

I would like to provide a brief description of the difference between classic social movement configuration and the more new-fangled organizational network by referring to the anti-war movement from the vantage point of Amsterdam.

Organizations like moveon.org, not to mention the other organizers of national and city-to-city street demonstrations in various parts of the world, came together in a very classic ‘movement’ configuration. Left political parties, trade unions, students came together, evoking in movement researchers the ‘68 moment, a new people power. Making that ‘68 feeling even more special, in Europe we witnessed church groups and peace organizations joining the street marches, reminiscent of the early ‘80s, where we saw one of our last massive outpourings of the people in the streets, protesting against the placement of Pershing missiles and nuclear power more generally.

Not only the demographics, but also the tools and techniques of the anti-war movement are throwbacks to ‘movement-building’. The huge print-out of petition signatories (sent to the U.N.), the candlelight vigils in the city squares, the dove iconography on either side of the lead banner in the march - war brought out the trappings of ‘movement’ from contemporary history.

War also tends to transform our media consumption habits, also coloring the view, for quite suddenly it is important whether CNN actually mentions Amsterdam in its demonstration city list. Discrepancies between the CNN people count and the indymedia people count become meaningful, too. Not just by participating in head-counting, but also in their data-gathering mode, news also makes it appear as if we are watching movements. News, with its traditional event focus, does not cover networks, also largely because of their inability to locate them with their preferred techniques. Eye-witnessing and (digital) video witnessing are not well suited to capturing networks or figuring out what they are about.

Thus for reasons of the anti-war movement and the anti-war movement coverage we may conclude that we have moved back to doing (and studying) movements. Some may argue that, for example, globalisation protest should become a movement, for its future could be thought of in terms of the opportunities presented by the anti-war movement.

At the time when RAND researchers have the authorities concerned about their inability to fight or address networks with hierarchies, and their readers are proposing complete communication surveillance as the only answer (because, as they say, you cannot infiltrate a network like you can a movement), we may begin to realise that returning to movement-building may not have the same to offer as the furtherance of networks might. What I mean is that movements are about demographics - demographics that the globalization protest (and most other networks) have not been able to capture, and possibly should not strive to do.

Thus the characterisation of an ideal social movement has to do with a demographic that unites diversity. One is not likely to find such demographics in social and issue network-building, though a 'stranger' network may be the closest resemblance.

The brief research project into stranger networks concerned the circulation of the prize (announcement), using the same method as the research into the press release about the downing of the Al-Jazeera Web site. We sought the name of the prize across a number of search engines, inquiring into its uptake by organizations beyond the ken of the APC.

Intriguingly, we found a diverse set of organizations picking up on the prize announcement, perhaps more than half of which were beyond one degree of separation from the APC.

Hafkin Prize 2002
Theme: People-Centred Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy in Africa
Criteria: 1. People-Centred and Mobilises Participation 2. Raises Awareness and Builds Capacity 3. Africa Driven and Developing Africa 4. Positive Community Impact

Our preliminary conclusion was that a chosen format indeed may organize a distinctive network. In particular, we are interested in the 'demographics' question that has concerned social movement builders, but from an organizational network point of view, as opposed to a people power or smart mobs understanding. Are NGOs able to organize stranger organizations? Indeed, there appears to be a choice between formats to organize a social, issue or stranger network. Our impression was that APC organizes social networks well, and also strives to organize issue networks, though the chosen old media format of a press release (in the particular case studied) was not successful.

Unknown sites / organisations taking up the Hafkin Prize (announcement)

<http://server.africapolicy.org/docs02/ict0211.htm>
http://spore.cta.int/spore96/esporo46_brief.html
<http://www.sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/elecnet.html>
http://www.123africa.com/fr/index.php3?cat_id=249&page=2
<http://www.adital.org.br/asp2/>
<http://www.africaonline.com/site/fr/africa/internet.html>
<http://www.afrique-info.net/page/index.php?num=22&p=3>
<http://www.biodiversidadla.org/article/articleview/2485/1/15...>
<http://www.bu.edu/africa/about/alumni/index.html>
<http://www.cads-sierraleone.org/civicusupdates165.htm>
http://www.digitaldividend.org/digest/digest_01.htm
http://www.dti.gov.za/saitis/Initiatives/List_current.htm
<http://www.esnet.be/communs/e-nx/e-nx17.html>
<http://www.gsdi.org/docs/SDIA/sdiav1n3.txt>
<http://www.iafric.net/benin/histong.htm>
<http://www.macommune.be>
<http://www.mail-archive.com/gainsnet>
<http://www.malilink.net/archive2002-1/1416.html>
<http://www.nilebasin.com/discus/messages/20/5446.htm>
<http://www.osiris.sn/article323.html>
[http://www.refer.sn/.](http://www.refer.sn/)
<http://www.schoolnet.na/news/archives.html>
<http://www.seul.org/edu/report83.html>
<http://www.woyaaonline.com/linksfr/PAYS/>
<http://br.groups.yahoo.com/group/proarteclipsPORT/message/90>
<http://br.geocities.com/inations/pworld.htm>
http://lists.copyleft.no/pipermail/fair_software/2002-November/000012.html

2. Is APC a social network or an issue network?

Attending the annual meeting of the APC afforded us the opportunity to look into how to characterise the APC network. Is it most significantly a social network, issue network or stranger network, whereby joining it and being able to work within it has most to do with getting to know each other well (social), with doing professional work on the same issues and in the same forums without knowing each other well (issue), or having only affinities to the work and citing it (stranger), without having to get to know the people or attempting to work professionally with the funders, inter-governmental organizations and lead NGOs on policy.

In order to come to an initial understanding of the APC network, two methods were used. The first was the creation of an on-the-spot questionnaire, sent to all its members with the request of immediate response. (How to format the questionnaire as well as how to phrase the request for immediate response were matters of some discussion. Once these issues were settled, APC showed its network expertise by accomplishing response rates unknown in social science! We return to this.)

The second method of determining the nature of the APC network was a physical exercise. With all annual meeting attendees gathered in the room, we asked everyone to get up off their chairs, and stand with the people they know best. The APC members first briefly divided into three groups. As the members glanced at people in the different groups, they all began to cluster together into one group. They all appear to know each other rather well (or at least perform a social network really well).

The second part of the physical exercise was to ask all present to separate into issue areas. First, we thought they would be able to self-organize, but subsequently we decided to call out: gender over there! Sustainable development over here! etc. We thought that if the one mass did not separate when asked the second question, APC is a social network. If they reconfigure (significantly), they are an issue network (as well).

Intriguingly, something similar happened in the second exercise as in the first. They were able to separate into issue areas, but these were not as distinct as we would have thought. Over a brief period of time, all present slowly began to cluster together (without creating precisely the same mass as before – there were differences!).

One explanation (that we found in the analysis of the questionnaire results) is that APC is a specialist in issue-hybridisation, with ICTs being the activity that allows them to break into issue areas (gender + ICTs, human rights + ICTs, etc.), and re-mass anew. The re-massing, we thought, would occur most likely when an issue area subsumes ICTs, thereby no longer requiring hybridisation. In this sense, APC pioneers issue hybridisation over and over again, and almost needs new issue areas to which ICTs may be safely attached (after other issue areas swallow ICTs into it).

There is also the scenario whereby ICT becomes an issue in itself, whereby APC would be able to play the role of hybridizer anew. ICTs only? No, there's also ICTs + gender, ICTs +

human rights, etc.! This is what transpired in APC's participation in the civil society group of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, December 2003), the subject of the research project, below.

From the physical moment, we concluded, in a preliminary fashion, that APC is a social network that is able to give life to issues (in networks) through terminological and other work that infuses the issues with ICT. Should ICT be the issue itself (as at the World Summit on the Information Society), then APC would be able to rehybridize ICTs into issue areas that would be seen by the summit as unrelated to ICTs in the first instance. Thus APC's networking also relies on its opening and closing of (re-sizable or re-label-able) Chinese boxes. The largest is ICTs, the next one is gender, the next sustainable development, and onwards. (See figure three for a view of how issue hybridization has played out over the past 10 years.)

In the other method to ascertain the nature of the APC network, we formulated a questionnaire. A methodologist and I sat down one evening and devised a simple set of questions, including organization name, mission statement, issue areas, activity key words, current project partners and future project partners. (With this last question, we used the term 'hopeful' partners.) The methodologists' format and the APC's format diverged. The APC person responsible for sending the questionnaire, and asking for rather immediate responses (given the short time frame of our inquiry), found quite some of the wording inappropriate and confusing. No questionnaire would be answered that took longer than seven minutes!

Below is the questionnaire sent to all 34 members of the APC.

At 10:09 PM 10/28/2003, you wrote:
Dear people

One of the workshops here in Cartagena where APC members are gathering for a face to face meeting hosted by Colnodo is working on mapping networks and issues.

As part of this we are working on a project to map the APC community (members and those we work with closely).

PLEASE help us by answering the questions below. We will share what we learn with you. The purpose of this exercise is to help us understand our network and how we can expand and strengthen it.

THANK YOU

Please can you get this back to us.. well.. I am embarrassed to say this.. but more or less immediately :)

Thanks again... and, if people don't have the time to fill in all the questions we will understand and still appreciate even an incomplete response.

Warmest regards from Cartagena

Anriette, Zoltan, Misi

Survey

Name and email of survey respondent:

Please respond in English.

1. Organization Name
2. URL(s)
3. Mission Statement
4. Key Words (Main Issues)
5. Key Words (Main activities/activities)
6. Geographical areas of activities (countries, regions)
7. Network (five main partners/collaborators/funders) [please circle/bold type of relationship]

Partner/Collaborator/Funder 1

Organization name

URL

Project name

Project key words (issues/activities)

[editor's note: The above was repeated four more times]

8. Potential Network (partners/collaborators/funders that you are not working with, but would like to work with)

For each partner/collaborator/funder that you would like to work with:

Potential partner/collaborator/funder 1

Organization name

URL

Key words (issues/activities)

[editor's note: The above was repeated four more times]

Anriette Esterhuysen, Executive Director
Association for Progressive Communications
anriette@apc.org
<http://www.apc.org>
PO Box 29755, Melville, South Africa. 2109
Tel. 27 11 726 1692
Fax 27 11 726 1692

APC Forum is a meeting place for the APC community - people

and institutions who are or have been involved in collaboration with APC, and share the APC vision - a world in which all people have easy, equal and affordable access to the creative potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve their lives and create more democratic and egalitarian societies.

We received 31 responses from 34 survey recipients within 24 hours! Most intriguingly, the NGOs were not able to fill in any information for 'potential' network. If we are able to discount the 'survey effect' of the item appearing last (which given the seven-minute prescription may be difficult), one could argue that the networks (and actors) beyond the ken of APC members are either all rather uninteresting, or unknown. We leave the question open whether stranger network location exercises, thereby, becomes futile, or more urgent. As APC appears to be a social network actively engaged in being a part of (as opposed to necessarily organizing issue networks), the stranger demographic remains an elusive network subject.

3. The hybridization of ICT at WSIS: Opening up the issue of ICT to development, gender and rights.

The book the APC recently published about the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) suggests that ICT as an issue is particularly susceptible to ‘hybridization,’ that is, couplings with other issues. In the run-up to the World Summit, the articulation of ICT as an object of policy-making (and contestation) is in many cases done by ‘splicing’ ICT with other issues: ICT and development, ICT and privacy, ICT and gender, ICT and security, ICT and human rights, etc.

WSIS to civil society is a platform for inserting rights and gender into the ICT agenda. Indeed, the WSIS network as it is disclosed by civil society organisations shows the prominence of hybrid issues. (See figure five.) We find the issues of gender/ICT and rights/ICT at the heart of the network. One-issue organisations – that is, organisations working primarily on *ICT itself* – appear more in the margins of the network: *icann.org*, *isoc.org*, *linux.org*, *gnu.org*.

Civil society and APC in particular engenders issue-drift by attempting to move the agenda from development/ICT to rights and gender. The WSIS network as it is disclosed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and its affiliates, equally shows us the prominence of hybrid issues in the summit’s space. (See figure six.) Here ICT appears coupled with development. Moreover, juxtaposing the civil society networks and the ITU networks, we get an idea of the kind of re-definition of the summit’s issues that the civil society network is trying to accomplish. One can say that the ITU and civil society networks are contesting the kind of hybridization of ICT that the summit is to accomplish. But, it is probably more pertinent to say that the civil society network is attempting to open up the issue of ICT/development to rights and gender - to hybridize ICT even more. The question is, did they succeed in this?

In order to give an answer to that question, we take a series of summit-related documents (the prepcom reports), and look for the presence of ‘rights’ and ‘gender’ in them (see figure seven). Gender was present in the compilation of statements from the first prepcom, and rights in the declaration presented to the third prepcom. But in the most recent document, an unofficial declaration compiled by the president of the summit, both terms have disappeared.

Instead of taking up the issues of civil society, the WSIS process has resulted in editing them out, at least on the verge of the summit (after the long prepcom process). In the last document, only the term ‘civil society’ is present, but not its issues. This could be read as implying that rather than involving civil society to participate in setting the agenda, the WSIS process involves civil society as an implicated actor, with no specific issues of its own.

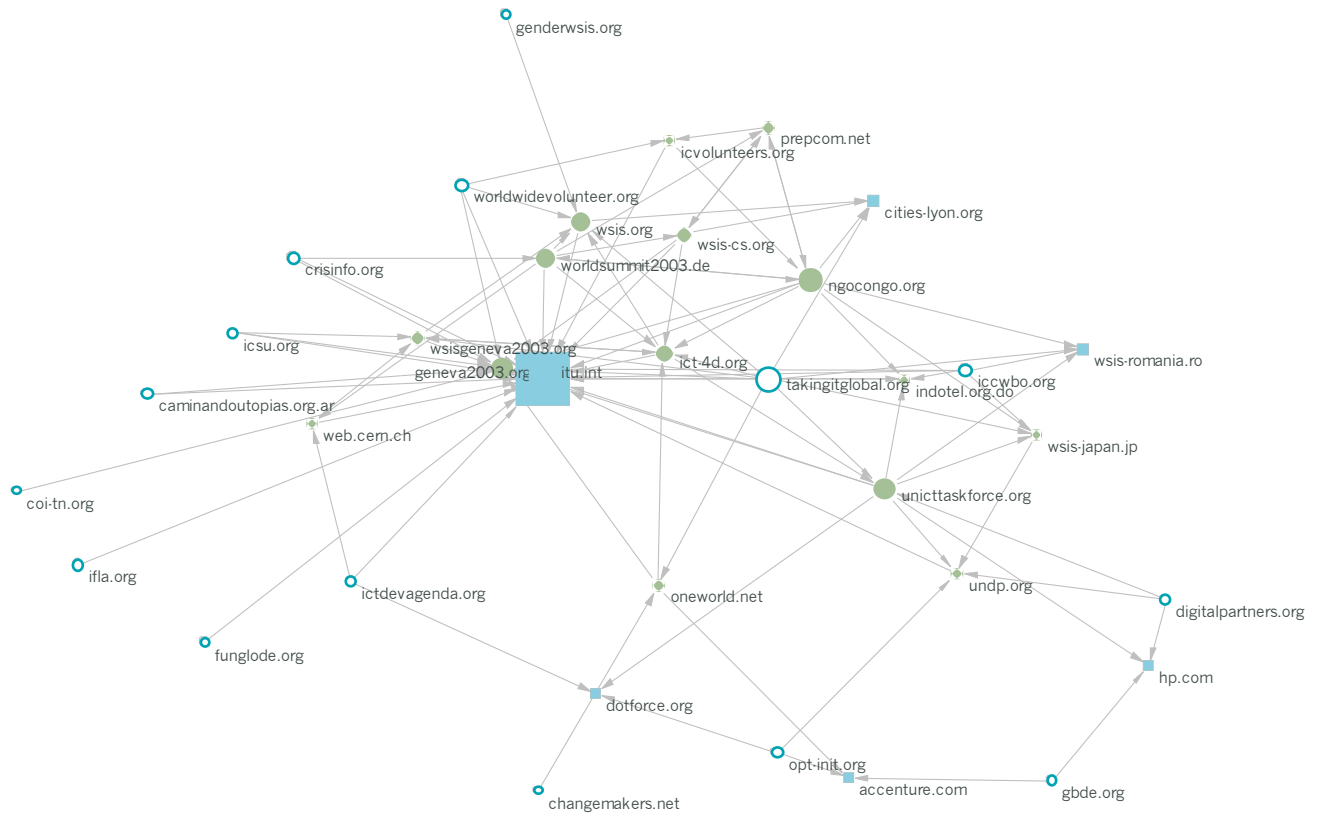


Figure six. WSIS network disclosed by the ITU.

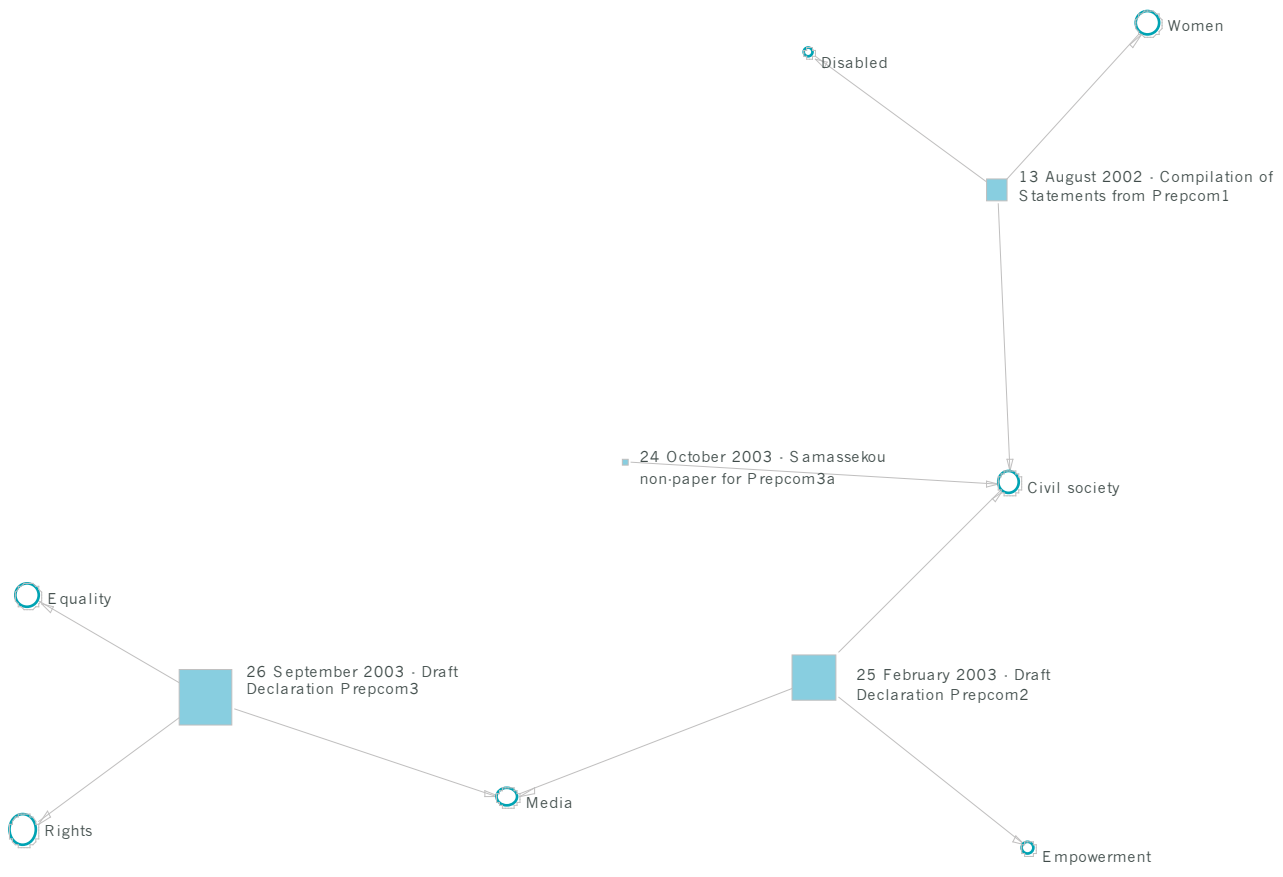


Figure seven. Fate of civil society issue language over the course of the prepcom's. Analysis of the prepcom documents in the run-up to the WSIS Summit, held in Geneva, December 2003.

4. 'e-formatting'. Is e-governance a women's issue?

In 2001 we studied the rise of the e-Development Gateway by the World Bank and NGO partners (who either remained in the process or left it). During the course of our research, the project dropped its 'e'. Once the Gateway was set up, the 'e' left the Web site. We thought that the early 'e' was the prefix that would generate excitement both within and outside the Bank, even help organize a network. Perhaps the 'e' was necessary to form the network initially, and once formed, it could be safely discarded, as the project normalised.

In 2003 the 'e' is being attached not to development but to 'governance'. Since we have been there before, we decided to look into the role of 'e-formatting'. We are interested this time, however, in whether it *should* be there. What sort of issue (and what sort of network) can be made out of 'e-governance'? There is a poignancy to the work, for one of the researchers (from Women's Net) is considering the organization of a workshop on women and e-governance, for the 'e-governance' topic appears to be hot (in inter-governmental and donor issue network terms), and thus perhaps in need of 'hybridisation' in the APC fashion.

Whether or not a workshop is in the offing, we are not very familiar with this issue-space, and we wonder whether the teaming up of women and governance is really helpful in the light of the objectives of women's organisations. Thus we ask, is e-governance a women's issue, and should it be one?

The research began with a series of queries to Google for the terms *women ICT governance*. Our suspicions were affirmed: "governance" only appears on the sites of international governing bodies. The term seems to have little to no life beyond the confines of these upper echelons. Virtually no women's organisations are attached to this term. When coupling the query terms *women ICT* with *democracy* and *empowerment*, on the other hand, women's organisations do show up on our maps. (See figure eight.)

Having concluded in a preliminary fashion that governance is not a women's issue, subsequently we went in search of an issue network on the Web, in order to find out whether democracy could be. If a women's organisation is to become active in this area, it seems more appropriate to take up (one of) the other two terms - democracy and empowerment - and to attempt to pull the issue-network towards them.

But which of the two terms is in this respect more appropriate? (See figure nine.) One thing to notice is that the term democracy brings along a particularly rich vocabulary, one that is both critical and constructive. (Attached to democracy, we find 'marginalisation' and 'male bias', but also 'women in politics' and 'accountability'.) The term 'democracy' seems to take into account both the frustrations of women, as well as their aspirations. 'Empowerment', on the other hand, emerges here as a relatively poor term. The same holds for governance, incidentally, which brings along an exclusively positive vocabulary, a feel good melody of 'making things better'.

In summarising and concluding the brief research project, we would like to point out that there is at least one catch. The terms that come with democracy are rather theoretical. There

is talk of patriarchy here. In this respect, a crucial question is, how can the notion of democracy also begin to cover a feminist practice? One answer is to drag the term 'advocacy' – which currently is linked to 'empowerment' – into the democratic space. Women's Net, which is now attached to 'empowerment', we concluded, should not move into the governance issue-space. Governance is not a women's issue. But if Women's Net would decide to move into the world of democracy instead, it would do well to bring one of its key-issues, 'advocacy', along.

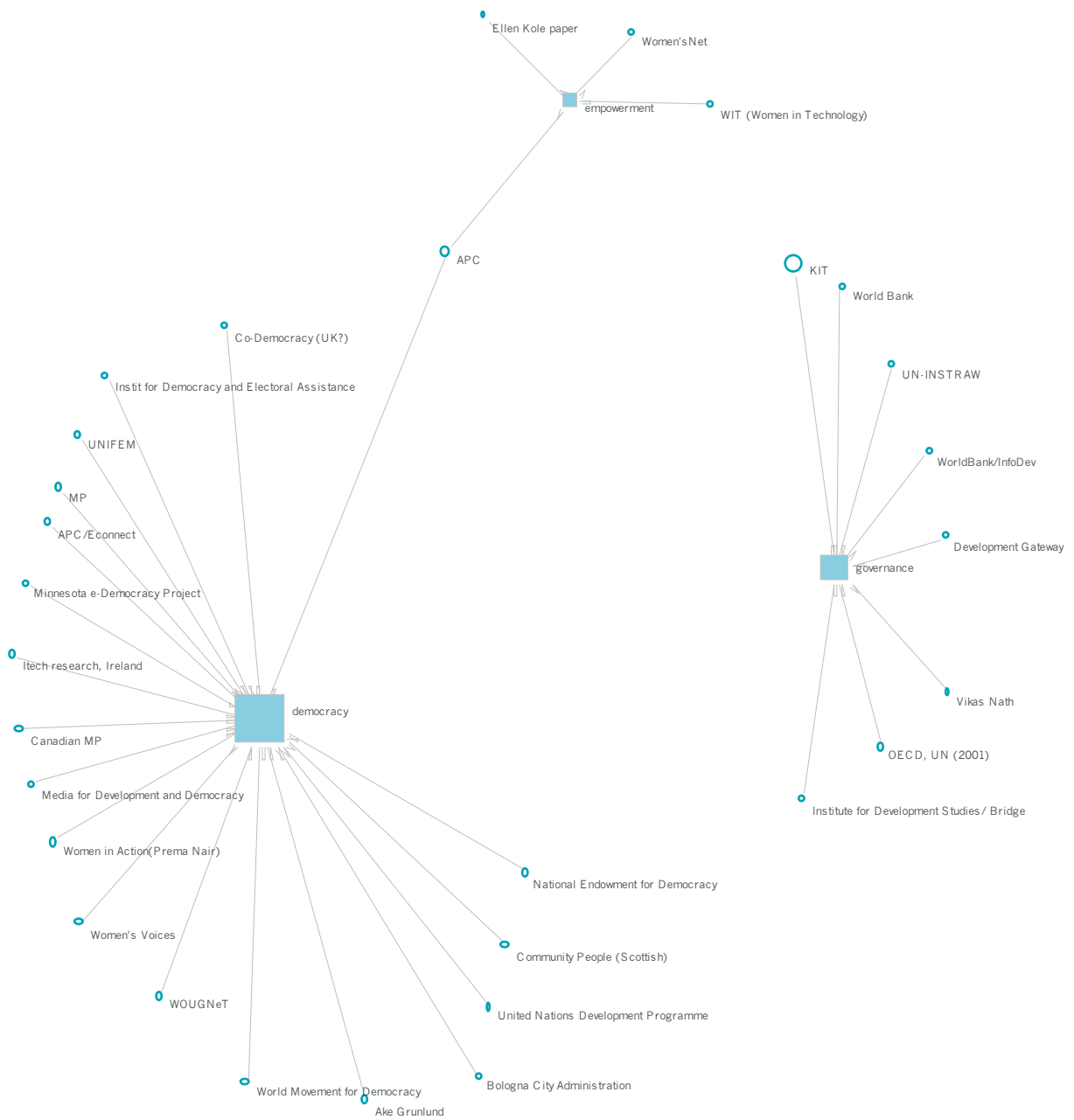


Figure eight. Governance' is not a women's issue, but perhaps democracy is.



Figure Nine. Where should the 'e' be inserted, if at all? The vocabulary of democracy and ICTs, as opposed to governance and ICTs.

5. From sustainable development around the world, to a sustainable Colombian network.

Is the Colombian Sustainable Development network real, or could it be made real?



Figure ten. Rds.org.co, the Colombian Sustainable Development Network site's front page.

Figure ten is rds.org.co, the Web site of the Colombian sustainable development network. Organisations have registered with the network, and they are organised into thematic groups on the site. However, judging from the site, or for that matter, from the information available to the network's host, there is no way of telling whether this network is also an active, coherent and committed network. We ask, how real, and how human, is the Colombian Sustainable Development network? This is especially important to us, as the international sustainable development network seems to be disintegrating. The site of the Panama network is no longer running, and neither is the Nicaraguan one. There is, however, a living Colombian network on Sustainable Development on the Web.

Tracing the Colombian Sustainable Development network on the Web, we are happy to find what looks like a strong and healthy network. (See figure eleven.) To begin with, the network that is disclosed by its members is clearly a national one. These organisations do not lead us into the foggy world of international organisations, but keep us firmly in the Colombian space. Secondly, the network appears to be active and self-sustaining. We find dense inter-linkings among the network's players, which is to say that the network does not depend exclusively on rds.org for its survival, or only appear as if it is a network by virtue of a single 'network' site. Certainly, the network acknowledges rds.org.co as one of its homes, but it is not held together solely by its host.

- undefined
- GOV
- CH
- EDU
- CL
- ORG

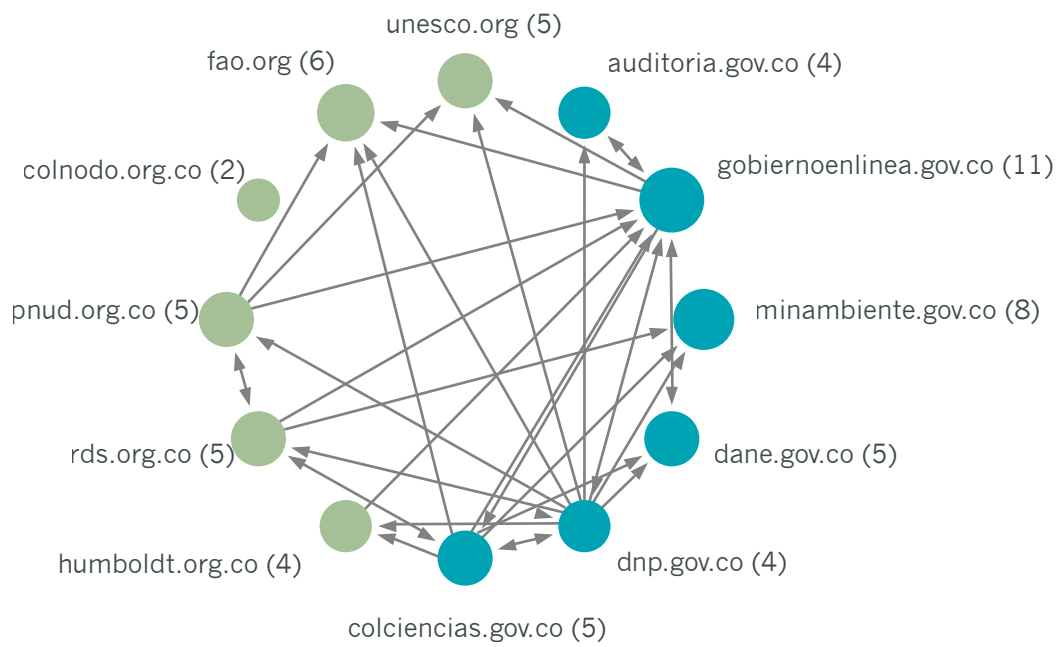


Figure eleven. A healthy Colombian sustainable development network.

Remarkably, the Colombian Sustainable Development Network on the Web is also about sustainable development. (See figure twelve.) If we look at the issues around which the network on the Web is organised, we find strong and clear terms which expressly fit the concept of sustainable development: education, community, environment, development, sustainable development. The network is organised by projects and arrangements that are true to the agenda of sustainable development. The network's players appear to be strongly committed to it as well.

Internationally, Sustainable Development, as an agenda, may be going through a difficult time, but as far as the Colombian network is concerned, the term makes perfect sense: it covers the issues of the network. The Colombian Sustainable Development Network may not yet be 'real', but it is certainly sustainable!

By virtue of the thematic coherences among the work of network members, and the many connections among them, the Colombian sustainable development network appears to be alive and kicking. The association that rds.org.co seeks to put in place does not just depend on rds.org.co. A Colombian sustainable development network that has configured on the Web, consists of committed players, both with respect to other organisations, and to the themes in the name of which this network deploys its activities. For this network to become real, or even human, it will need to have its coming out during an event. Whether and how this can happen the network on the Web cannot tell us. But the Web does show us that the Colombian network is sustainable. It is ready to become real.

6. Cancun. The missing middle, or is the United States the issue?

A Key Word Analysis of the Official Speeches at the Opening of the WTO Summit in Cancun (Fifth Ministerial, 10-14 September 2003).

NGO activities often follow inter-governmental schedules. On schedule, they have their own formats that are placed beside the inter-governmental formats. There are counter-summits, demonstrations and more. NGO summit preparation parallels inter-governmental preparation, and great use is made of the Internet in the logistical organization of NGO parallel events. This much we know.

In this piece of research, we are interested in having some idea about how to fill in the parallel format. We decide to fill it in by doing an analysis of the 'other building'. We would like to know not what NGOs are talking about, but what governments are talking about.

In the run-up to the WTO meeting in Cancun in September 2003, certain delegates from developing countries strengthened their 'bloc' known as the G20, or, as it has grown, the G22 or the G22+. Certain delegates made statements that the new bloc should seek ties with 'civil society'. The delegates have the impression that civil society and civil society networks may well be able to exert the necessary pressure on the other country configurations – the G8 and non-G8/G22 actors – to effect (substantive) change.

Before being able to answer any questions about the capacity of NGO networks to influence WTO Summit issue agendas (and the 'language' of final declarations, a subject of the WSIS research above), we decided to enquire into the substance of the three blocs (G8, G22, non-G8/G22+), and how the issue language may or may not overlap across blocs. How is the G8/G22/non-G8-G22 space textually organized?

We took a tidy set of data, the 130 official opening speeches of ministerial delegates. (Remarkably, delegates from Russia and the United States did not take the podium.) Having read some, we thought the opening day speeches are suitable for analysis into the overall Summit issue space, for each speech, typically, has three parts. First, there is the cordial welcoming, where new members are applauded. (Nepal and Cambodia joined the round this time around.) Second, there is commentary on the Summit process, the rules in particular. Finally, there are opinions expressed about which issues are most pertinent, the focus.

We undertook standard textual analysis, whereby a list of most significant terms is created. Certain of the terms are tagged, after we create a dictionary. The dictionary was made on the basis of summaries of the substance of the Summit, provided by the Third World Institute, Montevideo, Uruguay. In particular, we tagged the 'Singapore issues', the agenda put forward by the G22 bloc, as well as other significant terms that arose from the textual analysis. Finally, we inquired into what the three blocs textually share.

Figure thirteen is a depiction of the analysis, and the textual overlap of the three blocs. We have entitled each overlap space as follows. G8 + Other (non-G8/non-G22) is the formality space, G8 + G22 is the dialogue space, and G22 + Other is 'the United States as issue?' space.

The G8 and non-G8/G22 delegates are together enjoying diplomatic protocols and formalities. Welcome to the club! The introduction of Nepal and Cambodia gives the G8 countries and the non-G8/G22 countries the opportunity to share aims, rules and process with the rest of the world (with the exception of the G22, which may not celebrate the formality).

*Issue shared by the G8 and rest of world
(without G22)*

- Welcome (new members)
- Doha Development Agenda
- Doha Declaration
- Doha Round
- Integrated Framework
- Medicines
- Dispute settlement
- Economic Growth

Looking at the depiction, as we expected, G8 and G22 actors share the "Singapore issues," and they are enunciated in two languages, the formal Singapore Issues and the emerging, more contested language in the Singapore Issue space (see below). This is the substance of 'dialogue' between the G8 and the G22.

Issues shared by the G22 and G8

Formal Singapore Issues

- investment
- competition policy
- transparency
- in-government procurement
- trade facilitation

Other Issues in the Singapore Issue Space

- trade-distorting
- industrial tariffs
- livelihood
- transparency
- education
- human rights
- forestry
- food security
- quota-free
- North-South
- rhetoric

Whilst the G22 and the G8 talk about the 'big issues', the G22 approaches the rest of the world with something else: the relationship between least-developed countries and United States. The G22 feels secure, we thought, to speak of the United States as the issue with the rest of world as opposed to the G8, in a classic case of leverage politics (pressure by proxy).

*Issues shared by the G22 and rest of world
(without G8)*

United States
Least-developed countries
Special products
Liberalisation
Fairness
Consensus

Remarkably, we found a missing middle. The three blocs do not appear to share any issues, significantly. We recall that at the World Economic Forum, the slogan is "Nothing is agreed unless everything is agreed." The slogan for the 'failed summit' in Cancun could be the "missing middle ground". The question of civil society's role in this space may now be asked.

7. An issue-geographical reorganization of North-South from the South.

As our work was progressing, we learned of a north-south divide in the next room! There was an ICT policy workshop underway, where the participants (mainly) from the South were learning from teachers (exclusively) from the North. This arrangement paved the way for a discussion of the North-South divide.

Learning of this development, we decided to present the other room with a gift of a new map of the world that organizes North and South (and perhaps a North-South divide on southern terms) from an issue-geographical point of view.

The Third World Institute was kind enough to provide us with their database of northern and southern organizations working *in the South* on trade-related issues. We found that 'trade-related issues' appeared to be many other issues as well, or differently worded, that trade-related issues are about far more than trade.

We present a new map of the world, where relations between northern and southern organizations as well as each organization's respective issue areas 'geographically' organizing space. We made this space look like a map of the world, with equatorial divide.

APPENDIX

Project participant list (with original project names)

APC: "We put the ICT in Gender (and in many other issues, too)!" But in which order?

Cartographers: Karen Higgs, Maya Sooka and Richard Rogers

Is APC a social network?

Cartographers: Anriette Esterhuysen, Richard Rogers, Andrei Mogoutov and the APC members.

The hybridization of ICT at WSIS: Opening up the issue of ICT to development, gender and rights.

Cartographers: Pi Villanueva Reyes, Natasha Primo, Anriette Esterhuysen, Andrei Mogoutov and Noortje Marres

Is e-governance a women's issue?

Cartographers: Pi Villanueva Reyes, Natasha Primo, Anriette Esterhuysen and Noortje Marres

From sustainable development around the world, to a sustainable Colombian network.

Cartographers: Julian Casasbuenas, Omar Martinez, Rodrigo Barahona and Noortje Marres

Cancun after Cancun: Discursive alignments between government and civil society?

Cartographers: Andrea Antelo, Magela Sigillito, Zoltan Varady, Andrei Mogoutov and Richard Rogers

An issue-geographical reorganization of North-South.

Cartographers: Andrea Antelo, Magela Sigillito, Zoltan Varady, Andrei Mogoutov and Richard Rogers

Selected (Issue) Network Formats

<u>Summit and policy event</u>	<u>Webby politics</u>	<u>NGO mobilization</u>	<u>(Mass) media</u>
<u>Documents</u>	Dedicated <u>issue/event sites</u>	<u>Workshopping</u>	<u>Press release</u>
<u>Slogans</u>	Ad hoc <u>protest coordination sites</u>	<u>Camps</u>	<u>Video can</u>
Street Protests (<u>urban battle scene</u>)	Spamming (<u>bulk messaging</u>)	<u>Campaign</u>	<u>Scripted event</u>
<u>PrepCom</u>	<u>Discussion lists</u>	Coalition/Alliance	<u>Stunt</u>
Caucus	<u>Links to press coverage /</u> <u>Links to own press articles</u>	<u>Body politics</u>	<u>Celebrity use</u>
<u>Acronymn-ing</u>	<u>Blobs</u> (blog mobs)	<u>Award</u>	<u>Tactical exhibitionism</u>
Related <u>parallel event</u>	<u>FAQs</u>	<u>Tool</u>	

Literature

Hugh Heclo, "Issue networks and the Executive Establishment," in *The New American Political System*, American Enterprise Institute, Washington D.C., 1978, 87-124.

Maegaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activism Beyond Borders, Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1998.

Annelise Riles, *The Network Inside Out*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2001.

Micheal Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, Zone Books, New York, 2002.

Acknowledgements

The govcom.org team (Richard Rogers, Noortje Marres, Andrei Mogoutov, Marieke van Dijk and Auke Touwslager) would like to thank Julián Casasbuenas, the Colnodo Director, and the Colnodo group, for seeing to all the small but important details in hosting such an event. (We really appreciated the bandwidth!) We would like to thank Anriette Esterhuysen for the opportunity to study the network and the warm invitation. All of the workshop participants deserve our special thanks for their extremely hard work in undertaking rather time-consuming analyses over a 4-day period. Thanks to Karen Higgs for setting up all the communications with APC members, and to the APC members themselves for putting up with our requests for immediate responses to questionnaires. Finally, we would like to thank the Open Society Institute for its generous support.

Noortje Marres (the WSIS, e-governance and Colombian Sustainable Development stories) and Karen Higgs (the press release story) contributed text to the document. Any errors are attributable to Richard Rogers.