

**THE GOVERNANCE OF GLOBAL ELECTRONIC NETWORKS:  
Contrasting Views of Dominant and Non-Dominant Actors\***

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Abstract.

Most of the writing on the global governance of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) domain concentrates on the more developed and dominant global actors, while non-dominant actors, their interests and perspectives receive far less attention as serious objects of inquiry. To help remedy the imbalance we distinguish between the distinctive views of these groups, and then pose questions about the actual performance of global governance institutions and their impacts on domestic conditions. We conclude by pointing to ways that scholars can contribute to practitioners in this field.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Intellectual Barriers to Entry.

For serious students of the governance of global electronic networks these are the best of times and the worst of times. The best of times because a whole string of major theoretical and practical questions have arisen in the past few years about the relationship of the information revolution to matters of major concern – about IT and the structure and exercise of world power; about IT, economic growth and development; about IT and distributional equity in the world system, and in major countries. There are now unprecedented research opportunities to explore these new questions, and to link them to related subjects that have long attracted and bedeviled scholars of international relations – balance of power and the fundamental structure of the international system, international security, democracy and participation.

At the same time, for scholars this is also the worst of times. Theorists and good analysts must build their work by pointing out lasting causal relationships that do not change, or change only slowly. Yet here at the turn of the new century and millennium, many fundamentals of the international system are changing simultaneously before our very eyes. In studying ICT there are far fewer anchors to which we can secure our theoretical frameworks. ‘Ceteris paribus’ – all things being equal – is cited with less frequency today than decades ago. Everything everywhere seems to be moving, and fast – human migration, capital flows, weapons of mass destruction, broadcast images, terrorism and technological innovations. Even our assumptions about basic properties of leading actors – are they rich or poor – seems open to question. Is China a poor country with millions of peasants and poor laborers; or the country with the second largest economy in the world, nuclear weapons, space launch capabilities and more Internet and mobile phone users than anywhere else in the world?

Under these circumstances scholars confront a tough double imperative. On the one hand they must reach down and dig through the gritty details and minutiae of human migration, international capital flows, local entrepreneurs, and technological innovation, and try to master the empirical realities. This by itself is a challenge given the speed of change, the lag time in getting data, and the increasingly specialized (and expensive) sources of information. At the same time scholars must search for the elusive answers to the larger ‘so what’ questions. They must discern patterns before they are fully fixed and seek out trends in inherently unpredictable human behaviors.

Jonathan Aronson characterizes this condition saying “Analysts grappling with these changes often become mired in generalities or focus on specific micro-issues, losing touch with the bigger picture.” Two escapes from this problem are historical approaches or taxonomic efforts. (Aronson)

One common challenge is to decide where to cut into this continuum between big picture and minute details, since in order to reach conclusions about the big picture we need to know empirical realities well; to pursue the most important empirical details, we need a macro-level frame to tell us which facts are most likely to be important for big picture things we care about. This challenge is certainly apparent in the study of ‘global governance.’

A common solution to this dilemma in studies of ICT has been to concentrate on just a few dimensions of governance, and a few institutions. The favorite of both critics and enthusiasts is the allocation and registration of domain names and numbers, accomplished under the contested authority of the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). While an important exemplar of a new form of governance, nonetheless the amount of ink devoted to it at the expense of other formal as well as informal governance mechanisms is disproportionate to its importance.

At the same time, the explanatory models scholars are now employing to master the minutiae and divine the big patterns of new information and communication technologies remain rather modest. There is a lot of churning within the disciplines and professions, with tensions across as well as within them, over the best ways to poke and probe the ways of the digital world. There are countless rhetorical calls for more ‘interdisciplinary’ work, honored far more in the breach than in scholarly journals.

In the absence of a good match among big questions, good integrative analytic tools and accessible, intelligible information and data, we are all in a bit of a bind. With these field properties ICT remains a tough domain, where intellectually inquisitive but less informed researchers confront what economists would call high ‘barriers to entry’. One quickly confronts cognitive barriers to learning about ICT comprised of both the conceptual issues cited above, but also data sets which are either highly aggregated, guided by blunt, uninteresting questions, or else case study materials that are scattered and often incommensurate with one another. These conditions combine to keep researchers from exploring ICT-related topics in greater depth or sophistication, or from sustaining their interests once they get initially involved. In this regard the study of ICTs may not be too different from trying to master the politics, rules and performance of other high technology issues like bio-technology.

As a consequence of these professional and intellectual barriers, some graduate students, young professors and analysts of all stripes who are smart, inquisitive and innovative are probably kept out of the field. The big naïve questions they might bring, the new methods, the alternative frameworks; and as importantly, the old traditional questions that have puzzled scholars for centuries are less likely to be introduced, especially in a field that prides itself on novelty. We badly need to open up this complex, arcane and precious field to wider study.

In a perfect and generous world we would have unambiguous signposts and markers showing us how big processes work in this area, like tracing how links between micro-incentives and behaviors aggregate into broader macro outcomes. But alas, the world’s explanations are imperfect and stingy.

#### **Four Guiding Questions.**

The major purpose of this essay is to address these and related epistemological “so what” questions in the area of the governance of global (ICT,) and to report on the answers offered by the authors in this volume. We believe these questions receive far too little attention as sustained and serious objects of inquiry. Of course, in the Drake/Wilson volume not every author addressed all concerns equally, and I will try to highlight some of the differences across the chapters. The four initial questions we posed are:

1. Are there differences between what might be called a ‘Washington consensus’ and the policy preferences of non-dominant global actors in the domain of information and communications technologies?
2. How well are the current mechanisms for governing the global electronic networks performing?
3. What are the impacts of these global governance rules and mechanisms on non-dominant global actors, especially in developing nations?
4. How useful can scholars be to practitioners in the field of information and communications technology (ICTs?)

It would be naïve in the extreme to assume that these are the only important questions to be posed, nor that we can perfectly answer each in one essay. However, asking and beginning to answer them reduce some of the entry barriers to greater knowledge and wisdom in this emerging field of inquiry, and thereby improving both scholarship and practice.

### **Some Definitions.**

Before answering these four questions we need common definitions of the core concepts of this inquiry, especially the meaning of governance. ‘Governance’ is a term that has been given many meanings, perhaps most usefully defined by an important international commission as:

“the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public or private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.”

Brandt, in O Siuchru

Robert Keohane and Joseph P. Nye offer a complementary minimalist definition of governance as

“the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group...Governance need not necessarily be conducted exclusively by governments...Private firms, associations of firms, nongovernmental organizations...all engage in it, often in association with governmental bodies, to create governance; sometimes without governmental authority.”

(Keohane and Nye, 12)

### **Governance and Regimes**

In some areas, governance is quite explicit and institutionalized with clear enforcement mechanisms. These arrangements may take the form of a regime, authoritatively defined by Steven Krasner of Stanford as a “set of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations.” [Krasner] Krasner also points out that there is no single regime for all ICT activities, beginning his 1991 article with the sentence “There is no single international regime for global communications.

[The different technologies] are governed by a variety of principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures – or in some cases, no regime at all. Variation in outcomes can be explained by the interests and relative power capabilities of the actors in each case.” (Haufler and Smith in their 2003 essay concur with Krasner about the absence of an overarching governance regime in this domain of action. Krasner’s second point is especially worth noting here - the ICT domain (as distinct from a regime) is best explained by an interest and power-based model, not a neo-liberal institutionalist one. This is a theme to which I return.

There are industry or technology-specific rules and expectations of course. Mueller, Mathiason and McKnight defined Internet governance as “collective action, by governments and/or the private sector operators of TCP/IP networks, to establish rules and procedures to enforce public policies and resolve disputes that involve multiple jurisdictions. (Mueller, Mathiason and McKnight)

Most of the work done on the information revolution at the global level concentrates on the more privileged and powerful countries where ICT penetration rates are very high. There is far less work on non-powerful and non-privileged stakeholders, thereby limiting interesting questions of political economy and further marginalizing 2/3rds of mankind.

In the Drake/Wilson project, (backed by the Social Science Research Council) we were especially interested in the position of ‘non-dominant actors’ in processes of governance, that is, those outside of the circle of powerful actors in what other theorists might call “the center of the center. Internationally, “non-dominant actors” encompass virtually all the developing world. Domestically, non –dominant actors include NGOs who typically lack the power to influence important decisions about the allocation of scarce ICT resources in their own countries (much less globally)

#### **Question Number One: “Is there a Washington consensus on GGEN? Is there a counterpart ‘Rest of the World’ consensus?”**

Seeking to find a collective consensus among a large set of actors on any complicated global issue is always difficult. In the discussion at the authors’ meeting in Budapest there was initially a divergence of opinion. Some claimed that the differences of opinion and policy orientation across the World Bank, USAID, the Federal Communications Commission and the private sector were so great as to moot any notion of common concern among them. Others argued that the definition of consensus was largely a function of purposes. If the purpose is to compare and contrast institutions inside the U.S., then a consensus is elusive. When comparing the entire U.S. (and selected other G-8 nations) on the one hand, with other quite distinct ‘non-dominant’ actors on the other, (the “global South”, for example) then common positions do emerge that can be counterpoised to those held by other interests in the U.S.

If one can establish the existence of a “Washington consensus” held by America’s most powerful actors and their adherents, it is far more difficult to define a single consensus for the “Rest of the World” (ROW). By ‘ROW’ we mean non-dominant international actors, especially non-OECD governments, whose countries’ are more likely to be rule takers than rule makers. For us, “ROW” is roughly equivalent to “transitional and developing countries”. It also includes some NGOs in the core. In

general it makes sense to conceive of a 'ROW' grouping distinct from and sometimes at odds with the Washington Consensus. They lack power, playing only small parts in establishing the rules of the game of the international ICT market or regime.

The antecedent to our contemporary search for the outlines of a 'Washington consensus' arose in the 1980s during the controversies surrounding the preferred policy packages to achieve growth and financial stability in developing countries through economic reform. In his thoughtful and important work economist and Washington think tank insider John Williamson described the common policy positions around which the multilateral banks and others coalesced. He claimed that the repeated failures of multilateral and bilateral institutions to turn around stagnant economic performance in Less Developed Countries (LDCs) led the staffs of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, firmly prodded by senior Treasury and trade officials in the Reagan administration, to seek an alternative policy paradigm. The result of several years of continuing consultation and negotiations among Washington-based staffs and experimentation abroad came to be known as 'structural adjustment programs' ('SAPs') based on a precise policy sequence of stabilization, and then privatization, liberalization, exchange rate reform, foreign investment, fiscal conservatism, and a few other elements.

There was enough commonality among major northern-controlled institutions and national players for Williamson and other experts to conclude that there was something that was a consensus -- 'structural adjustment'-- and it became a term of art, and the chapter identified the components and sequences to implement it. Of course, Williamson recognized that for any major country case there were sometimes serious disagreements between the positions held by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the American administration. Yet for the most part the broad intellectual outlines of the framework of structural adjustment came to be widely supported in Washington and eventually in other G-8 capitals.

A similar intellectual consensus -- in some respects an extension of the earlier liberalism into a new policy domain, mainly telecommunications policy-- has again emerged among the leading Washington-based multilateral and bilateral institutions. The dominant consensus position includes three core elements; the priority order in which the substantive policy issues should be addressed, the preferred substantive positions, and preferences about the ideal forums within which governance of global electronic network ('GGEN') negotiations should occur.

### **Origins of the Consensus.**

In the early and middle years of the 1990s the new U.S. administration of Clinton-Gore began to argue forcefully in forum after forum that the information revolution could only reach its full potential if four major shifts occurred, shifts that included elements of governance. To a large extent these four balances extended the earlier liberal Washington consensus into the ICT domain, holding that government power needed to give way to private; monopoly conditions must move toward competition; domestic markets should be opened to foreign participation; and distributed management of ICT markets was preferable to centralized controls. Furthermore, the consensus held that government policies should be technology-neutral.

As with the original Washington consensus, the most radical proposals of telecommunications and other ICT reforms proposed by the administration were actively

opposed by many others, including some G-7 governments. While the political leadership and the technical experts in Britain and Japan were somewhat more supportive, the French and other Europeans were far more reluctant to embrace a new telecoms consensus. Initially then, the Washington consensus was very much only an ‘inside the Beltway’ consensus pushed by the White House and a few other institutions. But moving slowly in concentric circles, more and more of the G-8, and then other nations and international organizations, came to accede to if not accept the core tenets of the consensus.

What Are The Washington ICT Priorities?

The difference between the ‘conventional wisdom’ of Washington and other global actors is best understood at two levels – agenda and action. First is the matter of setting the global ICT agenda by determining which items should receive top priority and which should be addressed later. Second, stakeholders had to determine their own preferences for precisely what should be done about any given priority issue. Most informed and responsible actors, whether North or South, private or public, probably agree on the top dozen or so ICT-related issues that are critically important to global governance, and must be seriously addressed *at some point, in some way, by some set of global actors*. Based on our own discussions in Budapest, and in reading the available literature, in alphabetical order I submit the key global issues are Capacity Building, Digital Divide, Financing/Investment, Governance Reform (including expanded participation,) Innovation, Infrastructure, Intellectual Property Rights, Market Openness, Privacy (and Pornography); Regulatory Issues; Security and Sustainability.

However, the authors in this volume and other experts also agree that different stakeholders hold different priorities. That there are differences of ICT between the Washington consensus and the ROW should not come as a surprise. The fundamental structural differences between Washington, D.C. and Kigali, Rwanda, or even Rome, Italy are huge. The saturation of infrastructure and almost universal availability of ICT applications in the U.S. means that most basic information needs have been largely met in the U.S. and other G-8 countries, while remaining hugely problematic in poor countries.

The Washington consensus gives the following issues the greatest urgency: security, intellectual property rights, privacy and pornography on line, innovation and market openness. For their part, non-Washington actors in the developing south have very different priorities – Digital Divide, Financing, Infrastructure, and Capacity Building.

There are fundamental differences in the core interests of the Washington consensus and the typical preoccupations of the rest of the world, at virtually every level of analysis, from the micro level of individual concerns to the most global and macro levels. These differences come through quite clearly in the North American literature on governance. The following examples are meant to be illustrative.

Former Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Nye has held senior positions inside and out of government, including Assistant Secretary of Defense, and Dean of the prestigious Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. His writing and thinking has influenced a generation of scholars and practitioners, and in recent years he has devoted himself to issues of globalization, and especially the growing power of the new communication technologies. His edited volume *Governance in a Globalizing*

*World*, is a touchstone of contemporary American thinking on the problems this essay addresses. He includes two chapters devoted to the governance of global electronic networks, prepared by colleagues at the Kennedy School. Their focus in these two fine essays is entirely on core Washington consensus issues. Like many others in media, infrastructure-saturated North America, the authors are entirely preoccupied with issues of individual choice and freedom, reflecting the cultural orientation of Americans.

A second expression of the American ICT consensus is the series of publications by the consummate Washington insider institution, the Aspen Institute. Aspen is a think tank devoted to big ideas, with a well-respected special program on ICT that brings together thought leaders from industry, academia and government. Their most recent publication, *People Networks Power Communications Technology and the New International Politics*, is a sophisticated treatment of how the United States can most effectively promote national power in the information age. Invitees to the Aspen meeting that produced the report included not only ICT cognoscenti and 'geeks', but former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Queen Noor of Jordan, President Bill Clinton and other leaders outside the usual community of ICT experts.

Unlike the more micro-level concerns of personal privacy and security, this high level group addressed ICT as a tool of statecraft and an instrument of power to be wielded by government officials in a rapidly globalizing world that hampers the use of more traditional instruments of influence.

Other topics in this series included *The Rise of Netpolitick: How the Internet is Changing International Politics* (Bollier, 2002); *Uncharted Territory: New Frontiers of Digital Innovation* (Bollier, 2002); *Ecologies of Innovation: The Role of Information and Communications Technologies*. While these works indicate a broader appreciation of the power implications of ICT innovations, the titles in the Aspen series also express the particular combination of Washington policy preoccupations and the strategic priorities of corporations which are globally dominant. I submit that these issues are not the typical policy preoccupations when non-dominant stakeholders meet to discuss their preferred ICT preferences. Sometimes this discourse does address distributional and infrastructure issues like the digital divide, but with less consistency and depth (Wilson. Chapter 7, 2004)

Beyond the critical issue of priorities is policy substance – once issues are prioritized from most to least important, how should they be resolved? What precisely should government (and other stakeholders) do on these issues? What are the 'best' policies? Even if North and South could agree roughly on the same hierarchy of particular issues, they would not easily agree on how the issue should be resolved. The intellectual property issue is a case in point. Big global companies like Disney, or trade associations like the Motion Picture Association of America vehemently insist on the primacy of the private property rights aspects of IPR. Indeed, they seek aggressively to extend the time period and the scope of content ownership. By contrast, developing countries emphasize the community access elements of IPR - they seek shorter time periods of privileged protection, and insist that collective welfare considerations should trump commercial ones, as with pharmaceuticals to combat diseases like AIDS. They believe the North's liberal IPS demands on LDCs today are excessive and unfair constraints on their capacities to develop socially and economically, constraints not imposed on currently developed countries during their own earlier periods of

industrialization. Sharp disagreements pop to the surface too in IPR debates over trade mark, patents and privacy, even among rich countries. As Gus Hosein and Henry Farrel demonstrate in their essays on transborder flows and privacy in the Drake/Wilson volume there are important agenda and substantive differences among the OECD nations, especially between Europe and the United States.

Curiously perhaps for most of the 1990s and early into the 2000s the larger, more sophisticated, developing countries did not take radical or aggressive policy positions opposing the ICT powerhouses of the developed world. They fought and lost key battles earlier in the 1970s and 1980s under the rubric “New International Information Order” . But between 1990 and 2005 on global ICT issues, Brazil, China and India did not act collectively and were generally playing “below their weight.” Few LDCs took the hyper-engaged and supercritical stance that the non-aligned nations took earlier toward the “New International Information Order.” It was not until 2003 and beyond that Brazil and others seized the issue and tied it to other concerns like access to developed country markets. Why the big LDCs should have followed this path and not another is a topic that should be pursued by scholars.

In summary, our authors consistently identified the core components of the Washington consensus, and whatever the specifics of the recommendation in technical terms, the Washington consensus privileges market solutions over government, and market actors over government ones. Where regulation was called for, it is more likely in the service of market efficiency than social equity, and private self-regulation was far preferred in the North than in the South. As we see in the following discussion of the World Summit on the Information Society these tenets are not widely held in the global South.

### **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) as a Site of Contestation over Global ICT Governance**

If any single phenomenon epitomizes the clash of competing North and South visions for the future of ICTs globally, it was certainly the December 2003 World Summit on the Information Society. In that one event in Geneva was co-joined many of the issues analyzed in this essay - conflicts between the Washington consensus and the ROW consensus; between Northern and Southern priorities; and among the views of governments, private sector actors, and civil society. (SEE the new journal *Information Technologies and International Development* (MIT) which devotes an entire double issue to the ‘WSIS’ phenomenon.)

At the end of the meeting emerged a list of top priority issues which had remained contentious from beginning to end, and which were never resolved. The four issues that were placed at the top of the agenda to be negotiated in the pause between Geneva and Tunis (WSIS was held in 2 parts, about 12 months apart) were: Internet Governance, Financing Mechanisms to Reduce the Digital Divide; Human Rights and Democracy; and Intellectual Property Rights. One could not imagine a more perfectly represented of the concerns of South, North and Civil Society – each got one favorite issue, and they all agreed Internet Governance was critical, though for very different reasons.

The World Summit was conceived at the heyday of the Digital Divide debates and before the IT and telecom collapse when ICT was the hottest topic. It was to be a global conference of heads of states and governments to discuss how ICTs could be brought into

the service of development and organized under the formal authority of the International Telecommunications Union, (ITU), a UN body agency. Over time, the conference became a curious bifurcated beast with two main venues at one site. In one venue dozens of heads of state gave speech after speech declaiming their policy preferences and their commitment (often rhetorical) to ‘ICT for development’ (‘ICT4D’); in the other venue hundreds of NGOs, non-profits and a handful of private corporations held colloquia and exhibitions extolling their visions and showcasing their accomplishments and their wares.

These four troublesome, unresolved issues represented in one neat package the major points of disagreement between North and South, between the “Northern Consensus” with the Washington Consensus at its core, and the ROW consensus. Bundled together were the fundamental Northern concern of protection of intellectual property rights, as well as the Southern preoccupation with funding activities to reduce the Digital Divide, an initiative led by the West African country of Senegal. A third issue, human rights and free press was promoted especially for another non-dominant group of stakeholders, the increasingly vocal and assertive non-profits, including groups like the Association of Progressive Computing, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, and CRIS. Since the Internet moved more and more to the center stage of commerce, finance, trade, and government services, then various stakeholder groups, with their own reasons, grew increasingly concerned that the current institutional arrangements were inadequately representing their interests. (ICANN was especially problematic, but there were sharp concerns about the ITU, especially from the private sector and G-8 governments.

The Internet governance proposals stretched from the minimalist conservative positions of the ICANN greybeards and market liberals who strongly supported the *status quo*, to ITU backers who prefer a radical restructuring under their own aegis. (SEE discussion of Don MacLean’s framing of these positions below)

The discordant preferences expressed at the conference also reflected different preferences about participation and governance within the Summit process. Most notable was the self-consciousness and aggressive mobilization among non-dominant actors like non-profit, civil society-based organizations, almost exclusively from the developed North, seeking to expand their circle of influence in discussions of global governance at the Geneva and Tunis summits and by extension to other venues. Many LDC governments like China chose to exclude the NGOs from meaningful participation in the formal sessions, and to restrict the Summit to interactions mainly among government delegations. Perhaps the biggest consequence of the WSIS was less the substantive policy outcomes and much more the shift in a critical element of governance—which stakeholders get to come to the table and help (re)shape the rules of the game. To a considerable extent the vigor of the NGO non-dominant actors at WSIS was the result of earlier seeds of activism planted around (and in reaction to) the 2000 and 2001 G-8 summits in Japan and Italy respectively. In 2000 the Japanese hosts selected digital divide as a central issue of the meeting, and the Clinton/Gore administration, in their last year, backed the idea of bringing in more NGOs into the summit preparatory process, along with a group of prominent private companies. This process was co-chaired by an executive from AOL and the president of the non-profit Markle Foundation, Zoe Baird, who struck an alliance with some White House staff members to incorporate NGOs more prominently into the summitry than they had been in the past.

The resolution of these process issues about legitimate participation will continue to be addressed in the run up to the Tunis meeting. Whatever the specific outcome for Tunis, the authors in this volume believe that two non-dominant groups will likely enhance their influence in the coming years – the civil society lobby group and the private sector lobby. Yet their success is not automatic. There will be a contentious political process as the distinct sectoral interests seek to gain influence and gain a bigger say at the governance tables in the Tunis summit, as well as in other governance fora.

## **No. 2. How Well are the Governance Mechanisms Working?**

There are a plethora of ICT-relevant organizations with overlapping, competing and complementary authorities. The editors of this volume employed a singular schema to categorize this unruly and complicated set of authorities – *multilateral organizations* typically defined by treaties among many states; *'mini-lateral'* organizations that encompass particular geographic or functional sub-groupings (Africa; all rich countries; etc); and *self-governing* institutions, especially in the private sector.

There was a general consensus among the practitioners and scholars of our group, though not equally shared by all, that:

- each type of global governance institution holds certain advantages and disadvantages for ROW that are inherent in their principles of organization;
- none of the institutions was performing as well as needed for ROW stakeholders;
- there are some particular, special concerns about governance authorities that are especially relevant for ROW countries, and they should be directly addressed; and
- problems and solutions are relatively easy to identify analytically, but difficult to implement practically.

Beyond these few general statements, however, one has to turn to the particular, concrete governance arrangements to determine the extent to which they are working well or badly for non-dominant actors.

### **Multilateral**

Multilateral organizations include such ICT-specific bodies as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), as well as general purpose international bodies that affect ICT issues (such as the World Bank). Multilateral bodies have a number of important strengths, some of which have become much more evident now that some major bodies like the ITU are in relative decline compared to newer bodies like ICANN whose power has been growing, these shifts have particular impacts on non-dominant stakeholders.

There are several strengths for multilateral bodies: They are usually very inclusive and participatory; with their adherence to transparency and widespread participation for nearly all states, they can promote international buy-in and reinforce the norm of universality of the rule of law and universalistic goals. These bodies generally have high legitimacy among ROW states. They may also reduce some transaction costs for non-dominant stakeholder. Because the same norms or rules will tend to be accepted more widely than those achieved through other more limited channels, agreements struck there may increase the likelihood of wider conformity when they are implemented.

In practical terms for ROW stakeholders, especially LDCs, agreements achieved through this channel probably reduce organizational costs as well, since one meeting may

cover a variety of topics; by contrast as we see below, the private or self-governance process has more meetings and attendees are expected to pay their own way and provide their own expertise. For non-dominant, less wealthy stakeholder, the multilaterals help them monitor outcomes.

Of course, the multilaterals also have drawbacks from the 'ROW' perspective of non-dominant states and of non-profit organizations in developed countries. The most significant is that while nominally quite participatory and democratic, in point of fact there are huge power disparities within multilaterals that reflect the real-world power differences between the North and the South; some institutional arrangements not only reflect these differences, but exacerbate them as well. Second, while the multilaterals can write 'universal' rules, no solution is perfectly 'universal'. One size never fits all.

Thirdly, state-centric fora like the ITU often exclude private sector actors or non-profits from effective participation. More and more these stakeholders believe that their participation is not commensurate with their stakes and their weight in global markets in determining ICT outcomes. Finally, these bodies are inherently slow moving and bureaucratic.

#### Minilateral

Mini-lateral bodies are those like the European Union, or the Economic Commission for Africa with members drawn from particular well-defined subpopulations, and are designed to address the needs of that particular group of stakeholders. They are not meant to be universal. Sometimes these are ICT functions attached to pre-existing regional organizations like ASEAN. Sometimes the organizations are ICT-specific.

Such organizations are more likely to share certain fundamental values and interests, reflecting shared material, social and political conditions. Any given member of the European Union is more likely to share ICT interests with other members of the EU than with any single country in the Economic Commission for Africa or the Economic Community of West African States, or vice versa. In complicated areas of ICT governance, it is easier to reach agreement in smaller bodies with like-minded members; in general agreements can be reached faster. They have heightened possibilities for consensus. Mini-laterals also have the advantage of being closer to local conditions and local concerns.

Some global issues can be put up for discussion and negotiated at the regional level and agreements reached, prior to taking them forward to truly global forums. This can provide a positive clustering of regional issues, and by speaking with one voice, ROW representatives may carry more weight.

The weaknesses minilateral bodies are the flip sides of their strengths. They tend to be parochial in the pursuit of their interests. They risk creating or reinforcing global fragmentation, which is particularly problematic in the era of globalization and the world-wide spread on new communication and information technologies. 'Regional' Internet protocols raise severe and sometimes impossible problems with a global technology. Political regionalism and technological universalism seem to pull in different directions. Regional myopia, or selfishness, may serve to block the more rapid spread of ICTs to precisely those regions that most need them. In the run-up to global negotiations, minilateral deals may actually delay achieving full international agreement.

There are also aspects of realpolitik at the regional level (or functional level) as there are internationally. All regions of the world have at least one regional hegemon with disproportionate power to set and enforce unilateral priorities (think China and India in Asia; Brazil in Latin America). They may use their regional clout to influence outcomes unduly.

Comparative advantages. In a very useful presentation to the Budapest workshop Tim Kelly, head of the research unit of the ITU, suggested that areas where multilateral action are almost always better than bilateral, regional or small-group actions. Most notably:

“Trade negotiations, and stewardship of international resources like satellite slots, frequencies and numbering systems. Conversely, there are areas where small group actions are superior – network security arrangements; ‘first round’ standards-making; and perhaps cross-border licensing agreements. There may be opportunities for learning and teaching in smaller, more homogenous like minded organizations that may be more effective than in large heterogeneous ones.” (Kelly)

#### Private Sector Self-Governance

This last of our three categories has become highly problematic in our modern period for ROW. Whereas multilateral and unilateral bodies have had substantial authority in the ICT domain for decades, and are familiar to the ROW, the more private-regarding bodies are much more recent and unfamiliar, especially for LDCs and NGOs. According to the authors in this volume, they pose some advantages but also real problems.

Their advantages are similar to those of the other ‘non-universal’ types – multilaterals. They are close to the problem, and encompass many of the actors most affected by technological change. Their smaller size and greater flexibility help reduce transaction costs, and promote micro-efficiency, enabling them often to reach agreement and act on their agreements quickly.

These arrangements also suffer shortcomings. Bodies like the ICANN or ICC suffer from their exclusivity and absence of transparency to outsiders, and hence lack legitimacy for some stakeholders. Nor is there much representativeness (and hence legitimacy) afforded to these bodies since participation by non dominant actors is limited. Indeed, because they lack legitimacy even among their own members, it may be difficult for such bodies, especially when they are advisory, to enforce their agreements among their members.

For outsiders, there is also the risk that these arrangements smack too much of the ‘fox guarding the chicken coop’. Indeed, some of these self-governance efforts are established precisely to thwart other initiatives launched by governments, NGOs or other interests that private stakeholders seek actively to avoid. They calculate which forums are most likely to provide favorable and unfavorable rulings for which proposals, and act accordingly. The self-interest of the private actors may not be coincident with the interest of the public – the public interest -- at large.

It is important to distinguish between the ‘self-government’ of firms and corporations in the private sector, and the self-government of the non-profit, non-governmental sectors. ICT-oriented bodies like the CPSR have become much more active

in recent years, are becoming more assertive in a variety of forums, with a sharp spike in visibility around the WSIS. However, they lack the comparable long experience of cross-organizational cooperation that marks private sector cooperation through bodies like the International Chamber of Commerce. These two types of stakeholders have very different interests, resources and experience that they bring to the process of governance.

The Fourth Sphere of Governance: Market Powers

The authors in this volume concentrated on those features of the global environments that most directly affect non-dominant stakeholders in their efforts to define and act on their interests, whether as constraints or enablers. For the most part the editors asked them to concentrate on the opportunities and constraints that flow from the actions of public institutions like national governments and international bodies like the WTO or ITU. Therefore, they devote less attention to the constraints and enabling powers of market institutions.

Yet among the most powerful trends in the new global ICT environment has been the massive shift from public authority and power toward private. In both new media and old, we see the signs of growing legitimate exercise of power by private firms, national and international trade associations like the GBD(e), as well as gaining greater authority within the traditional inter-government international organizations. Most prominently is the straightforward if politically charged transformations of state assets and state control into private assets and management through privatization (around \$15 billion in Brazil alone).

These shifts significantly alter the logic of global ICT governance. Certainly in terms of service provision and the introduction of new products onto the market, private actors predominate by far. The private sector exceeds the public in capital investment, and in number of clients; the public sector now plays second fiddle to the sheer market power of the private. Decisive power over property rights, culture, innovation, job creation and other valuable resources has been enhanced not only because of the shifts of responsibility within the telecommunications and broadcast sectors, but because they have occurred across the board in other sectors of the economy as well, as correctly pointed out by scholars like Virginia Haufler in her book *A Public Role for the Private Sector: Industry Self-Regulation in a Global Economy* (Haufler) Thus, the private global investment decisions of an Intel in Costa Rica, or Texas Instruments in Bangalore or IBM in Brazil have literally changed the ICT trajectories for those nations and others.

As a result of these global rebalancing of public-private relations, the GGEN today is much more the product of private as well as public stakeholders jockeying to advance their interests, with private stakeholders gaining more and more influence. Of course, which particular actor or coalition dominates any particular negotiation is largely a matter of the immediate political, institutional and policy context in which the negotiation is embedded [Wilson, Wong,NTN] These are contexts which are quite fluid and unsettled because of the continuing trends of technological and commercial convergence, concentration and privatization around the globe. We do not deny that in the last instance it is states that possess the authority to set the rules and structure new regimes, as Krasner reminds us in his provocative essay “Global Communications and National Power” (19??). But the growing role of private power should not be minimized.

Lawrence Lessig has written at great length and convincingly on the implications of the trend not only toward privatization, which he supports, but toward tremendous

corporate concentration as well, both domestically and internationally, a theme that the authors repeatedly address in this volume. [Lessig] He argues persuasively that the gargantuan multi-media companies are selfishly shrinking the space for public civic engagement and social coherence, and that steps need to be taken to protect the commonweal in the age of digitalization. Lessig's arguments focus mainly on private-non-profit interactions in developed economies, but they are equally applicable to non-dominant nations, and to NGOs and communities within poor countries. (Lessig)

### **Summary: How Well Are the Institutions of Global Governance Performing**

In the words of one author, the international governance system is “screwed up and screwy”. None of our authors believed it was working particularly well as a whole, and all identified areas of weakness and suggested where it could be strengthened substantially. However, none of the authors claimed that the system was completely ineffectual or the status of the ROW stakeholders hopeless. Instead, this view tended to prevail:

“The international decision-making agenda on ICTs is increasingly complex and difficult for all participating governments and other stakeholders, particularly difficult for developing countries with limited financial and human resources available to analyze prioritize and participate in the widening range of institutions making decisions that effect their ICT future...” One contribution to the solution is by making the institutions more inclusive at every level – global, regional national.”

We have seen that the big important treaty-based arrangements like the ITU have the advantages of inclusiveness, continuity, legitimacy and wide coverage of issues. On the other hand these bodies are big and clumsy with slow decision making procedures. They tend to be stodgy with too much attention to the past and not the future. They also have suffered from a lack of expertise in critical areas of innovation, and lack the trust of some of the most powerful players like the U.S. government and much of the global private sector. Other types of governance arrangements are more nimble and forward looking, but often lack the legitimacy of the multilaterals. The challenge is to make these four distinct governance approaches complementary to one another, and simultaneously to advance the interests of the entire global community, the non-dominant actors as well as the dominant.

### **No. 3: GLOBAL IMPACTS OF GGEN ARRANGEMENTS – Or “So What?”**

This was the most problematic and difficult question to answer of the entire exercise. All the authors found it quite difficult to point consistently and convincingly to the most likely national impacts of the international governance arrangements they analyzed. The problem is rooted partly in the absence of the necessary empirical work carefully reviewing on-the-ground outcomes in Africa, Asia or Europe; partly in the absence of appropriate conceptual frameworks linking diffusion and impacts. [Attewell,]

A major problem in the literature – both academic and policy – is that analysts conflate changes in ICT and its impacts *within* the confines of the sector, with impacts *beyond* the sector, upon society more broadly. It is useful therefore to differentiate between the sectoral and the societal impacts.

Let me rephrase the impact question more explicitly: “*What is the impact of global governance arrangements on the institutions and processes that most directly affect the activities and conditions most people care about in their daily lives -- their jobs, their health, their security, their education, their general well-being?*”

## **Impact Findings**

All the authors found in general that the links between global and national were ambiguous, and only two chapters focused specifically on a single nation and its internal dynamics – describing South Africa and South Korea. Without going into details, several essential analytic and theoretic issues emerged out of the authors’ treatments that bear on the extent of international institutions and governance arrangements’ impacts on ROW stakeholders.

1. *Problem of Multi-Causality* Even if we can identify particular changes in the domestic production and allocation of resources that seem to derive from causes beyond their borders, it is difficult to show which of many external conditions ‘caused’ a particular domestic outcome. For example, if a poor country government liberalized its telecoms sector soon after adopting the 1996 WTO global telecoms accords we cannot be confident that it was only, or even mainly, the formal signing that provoked the domestic reforms. A partial list of other potentially relevant factors must include: demonstration effect of reforms in other countries; pressure from multilateral lending bodies like the World Bank requiring structural adjustment programs, including privatization; direct bilateral pressures from powerful Northern governments with domestically influential telecoms corporations; commercial and political pressures from individual firms onto government decision makers; indirect influence to reform exercised through business associations like the International Chamber of Commerce; pressure from local entrepreneurs seeking greater opportunities in the locals markets; recognition by domestic actors that liberalization and competition and privatization can bring improved services to consumers as seen in reduced waiting periods for telephones, lower prices, wider choice; and government officials’ recognition of global market trends.
2. *Lag Times*. Our chapters were written in 2003; the domestic impacts of changes in international governance do not always flow swiftly to the local level, These lags reflect tardiness in policy and project implementation; they may also result from deliberate attempts by a government to drag its feet, resisting putting in place policies they do not like but were forced to agree to.
3. *Slow Implementation*. All authors point out that domestic, local interests have been able to resist the most severe pressures of the new regime to sign agreements the North prefers, and to delay official timetables the North prefers. The principal conclusion of Cohen and Gilwald is that the political leaders in South Africa’s transition from apartheid were already moving toward a more economically liberal system, prior to the WTO agreements. Nor were they willing to go much beyond the parameters of what their own domestic experts and constituents seemed to demand of them. Authors do believe that stalling or renegeing will

become more difficult through time, but for now ROW officials can and do delay implementation.

4. *All Agreements Are Different.* No two countries have perfectly identical arrangements. Guermazi, Cohen/Gillwald and others point out that it is virtually impossible to review the general language of a global deal. and have a clue about its specific national impacts, since each agreement is individually negotiated. There is no simple ‘cookie cutter’ pattern; in effect each country signs a different accord, so the impacts will differ as well.

5. *Limited ICT Diffusion* ‘Impacts’ of IC governance rules beyond the sector will be sharply limited in poor countries because ICTs themselves are not widely distributed in most developing countries – only .5% of Africans have access to the Internet. Only about 3% of Latin Americans do.

6. *ICTs’ Relative Unimportance* Other global rules and treaty requirements weigh much more heavily on ROW decision makers than Internet or telecoms. National leaders and their constituencies are much more likely to be deeply concerned with like trade in agricultural commodities and Northern government subsidies to their farmers; or debt renegotiation; or structural adjustment requirements by the World Bank or IMF. Relative to these other very burdensome challenges, ICT outcomes may seem rather unimportant and will not attract the same leadership and institutional attention and support.

7. *Data Shortcoming* Finding accurate, meaningful reliable indicators of domestic – international links is not easy.

If it would be extremely naïve to claim a one-to-one relationship between external cause and domestic effect it would be equally naïve to argue the opposite – that these arrangements have had no impact, whether through a single channel or in the aggregate.

Several of our authors do wrestle with this issue. For example, Farrell teases out the evolution of privacy protection across several different levels, from broadly global, to EC regional, to domestic, “where international pressures play out – in a modified form – within specific institutional contexts. ... There is evidence of a move towards hybrid arrangements in many advanced industrialized democracies, and furthermore towards an increased involvement of transnational self-regulatory organizations such as TrustE and BBBOnline in privacy protection.... Even more worrying is evidence that new relationships are being created between states and private sectors (telcos and ISPs) in which the latter take on responsibilities of enforcement and data gathering that negative consequences for privacy. In short, deepening relations between public and private actors pose new policy problems, both of which are aimed at protecting privacy in a globalizing world,....” But with the result that “accountability, transparency and understanding oversight [are] weak.”

The impact of the external on the internal is precisely an issue where scholars need to “import” frames available in the mainstream social science literature to explicate the ICT case. The long tradition of critical analysis like those of the dependency theorists, some Marxists and even neo-realists would assume that the external linkages are inherently asymmetrical inherently and likely to be exploitative, and that governance arrangements are imposed by powerful external actors on unknowing or powerless ones.

Neo-liberals would assume the opposite – that new regimes and governance arrangements will enhance international exchanges which will by definition enhance the well being (and probably global status) of non-dominant actors. Alternatively other scholars might be less confident of paradigmatic predictions and assume greater indeterminacy requiring very careful analysis of each and every case of governance-mediated ICT impacts and the structure and dynamics of negotiations that surround these cases.

Most of our authors take a third perspective – assuming the power advantages of the dominant states, but insisting that non-dominant stakeholders can improve their future standing through smarter international negotiations based on better domestic governance arrangements.

#### **Question Number Four: What Can Scholars Contribute to Practice?**

A major purpose of this project was to explore the multiple intersections between scholarship and practice in a rapidly evolving domain of growing interest and importance. (To achieve successfully this aspect of the author's project the organizers invited to the project conference in Budapest an equal number of practitioners from the worlds of government, NGOs and the private sector as well as scholars from universities and think tanks. All participants had demonstrated experience working across their institutional and sectoral borders which contributed immensely to the project's success.) We hoped that this rich mixture of practitioners and scholars would yield benefits not otherwise achievable. The engaged scholars came from universities and research centers in India, Korea, South Africa, the UK, US and the thoughtful practitioners hailed from private companies like AOL, Fujitsu and Hong Kong-based PCCW; NGOs like the Brazilian RITS, and the Association for Progressive Computing based in South Africa. The group also included government representatives (Russia). Countries represented included Canada, China, Hungary, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Tunisia, U.K., and the U.S. The Budapest meeting built on an earlier meeting held at the Social Science Research Council office in Washington, D.C. where scholar-practitioner links was the principal subject of discussion among the practitioners and scholar participants, sparked unique observations and insights we could not obtain otherwise.

The group began with the recognition that there are very serious barriers to effective two way communication across the communities. Top scholars like Robert Putnam of Harvard and Craig Calhoun of the Social Science Research Council have recently pointed out how much the traditional academic disciplines have retreated from real world problems to immerse themselves in inward-looking scholasticism, to the detriment of a better informed citizenry and good policy. [Putnam, Calhoun] Exactly What Are Scholars Asked to Contribute by Practitioners?

During periods of rapid, widespread and deeply felt changes the role of the scholar can be especially valuable if especially difficult. Valuable because they have the potential to help others sort through the chaff to uncover what is truly of great and lasting importance as distinct from the ephemeral and superficial; they can also help identify those issues that are ripe for immediate attention and resolution, while recommending others that can be addressed in the fullness of time. Yet these potential contributions are highly problematic precisely because the usual signposts have been shaken up, knocked

down and sometimes point in the wrong direction. Data are scarce and unreliable, concepts unclear, and links between causes and consequences seem newly problematic. For scholars, such conditions call for extreme caution, with occasional dramatic leaps of faith.

If working conditions inside the scholarly community are confusing, relations between scholars and practitioners are also highly problematic. The two groups sometimes seem to occupy parallel universes that only rarely intersect, each with different purposes, priorities, reward structures and with a different sense of urgency and time. Yet the field of ICT is an area where those who must act quickly frequently seek useful knowledge, guidance and information from others, and where researchers seek new and interesting topics of investigation.

Several distinctive themes emerged from the discussions among practitioners and scholars in our Budapest conference, our Washington seminar and in discussions with experts. One had to do with the channels, mechanisms and processes through which interactions occur, and how to improve them. The other had more to do with categories of analysis and their relevance for action – theories, concepts, definitions, and so forth.

While in this essay I pay more attention to the latter than the former, let me address briefly the question of channels. Most scholars try to contribute to the advancement of science and action through a variety of means that create and diffuse new knowledge. These channels include their classroom teaching, scholarly writing in academic journals, participation in professional meetings and associations, training, providing advice to groups or individuals beyond the campus and through their public engagements like speaking. A consistent theme from the practitioners is their need for greater access to new scholarly knowledge through a much wider array of channels, in different formats and with language accessible to the informed layman. These could include everything from websites to regular face-to-face briefings to short concise research summaries available by e-mail.

### **Frames, Concepts, Causes, Details, Dynamics, Linkages, and Freedom of Choice.**

But practitioners demand help on substantive matters as well as processes and products. Let me try to translate the requests of the practitioners into terms of art more familiar to scholars. These I would characterize as Frames, Concepts, Causes, Details, Dynamics, Linkages, Best Practices and Freedom.

#### **Frames**

Again and again practitioners in Budapest and Washington explicitly asked scholars for help in ‘putting the issues in context’. Contextualization meant, in part, situating the particular issue at hand into its most relevant societal setting. Of what broader whole is this ICT a component part? What is it related to? How best should questions about the global governance of ICTs be broadly framed? This means pointing to clear as well as non-obvious linkages between the particular ICT issue at hand (‘broadband’, ‘digital divide’) and broader issues of society, culture or economy. Take the question of how to frame “Internet governance”. At the most fundamental level is Internet governance best understood as a matter of neutral, non-partisan experts cooperatively setting global technical standards in everyone’s interest? Or are stakeholders ‘really’ engaged in pursuing narrow agendas, best understood as a matter of

high politics and power struggles among competing interests? If the Internet is political, is it a global struggle among states, or among companies, or between both with the involvement of civil society organizations and inter-state institutions?

One recent example of creating a new frame to discuss ICTs is the way in which some scholars have reframed what are typically seen as separate and distinct technical issues and reframed them into a broad new category of public policy. David Bollier and others have seized upon rather dry communications and information issues like spectrum allocation, patents and copyright and bundled them together under the overarching frame of ‘information commons’. Under this rubric these heretofore technical issues are redefined as single manifestations of a larger issue, scarce valuable publicly held resources, and revealed to share a collective importance to citizens, analogous to the way common pasture land was important to herders and other citizens of an earlier age. [SEE Kranich’s essay *The Information Commons* for a statement of this process] The title of a book by Lessig reveals the thrust of the reframing: *The Future of Ideas – The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*. (Lessig)

### Concepts.

During this tumultuous period of deep and far-reaching changes in the ICT sector, new terms are introduced in cascading numbers, and old terms quickly lose their meaning, sometimes to numbing effect. This occurred with concepts like ‘universal service’ and ‘digital divide’. Under simultaneous pressures from rapid technological change and growing standards of living in many countries, the meaning of “universal service” began to change, and the concept of universal access grew in popularity. “Universal access” came to mean that Internet connectivity was available to citizens although not necessarily in their homes, as with telephones, but within a ‘reasonable’ proximity to their homes. While admitting the huge challenge of defining ‘reasonable proximity,’ there arose the challenge of distinguishing between ‘formal’ access and ‘effective’ access. Should access be conceptualized mainly as access to basic communications infrastructures? Or did it also include access to the training, cognitive skills, financing or relevant content that would transform formal into effective access? The concept of ‘digital divide’ was also defined differently by different actors. For some, it was interpreted as a growing gap between information haves and have nots, a definition promulgated by some international bodies like the UN. For others, especially international business groups, the most appropriate conceptualization was ‘digital opportunity’. Digital “have-nots” were defined positively as a potential business opportunity. The ways in which these and other institutions acted on the ‘digital divide’ substantially reflected the priorities and perspectives of the different stakeholders, as codified in competing conceptualizations. Reaching a commonly accepted conception proved impossible.

### Cause and Effect.

Practitioners also want to know about what works and what doesn’t. And under what particular circumstances? In other words, they want to know about cause and effect in the ICT sector. Statements that point out relations among cause and effect are theories. A wise man once pointed out that nothing is as practical as a good theory. If this condition occurs, then this thing will happen. Will ICT ‘cause’ development (no). Does

development cause ICT diffusion (sort of). Is the Internet reducing hierarchy inside formal organizations (yes, under some circumstances) The biggest challenge in our project and in general is that the practitioners strongly prefer what scholars are hard-pressed to give them – a cause and effect rule, a “best practice” that is universally true and universally applicable with the same outcome all the time. It is the scholar’s job however to resist such over-easy generalizations and to point out these theories only work when the conditions are specified. Then the question becomes “*Under what circumstance* is this or that a ‘best practice?’ Under what conditions of supply and demand is this a best practice? Under what institutional conditions?” A “lesson learned” or best practice in the presence of an effective telecoms regulator may not be a best practice in the absence of one. As several multilaterals have discovered recently (infoDEV, housed at the World Bank), as well as bilateral agencies (IDRC), capturing best practices is both difficult and expensive. It cannot be done post hoc but must be built into the front end of projects.

#### Details

Scholars are also frequently asked to contribute empirical details about global governance. What are the exact responsibilities of INTELSAT? What position did the EU take on the governance of privacy relative to Japan? Free standing case studies of aspects of global governance of the electronic networks should not be underestimated during periods of great change. Accumulation of concrete facts about the world, facts which then can be agreed upon by the relevant actors, is important. The chapter Robert Frieden in the volume on the sometimes arcane details of international satellite services is a case in point of a scholar addressing the minute details, but also linking them to broader issues.

#### Dynamics

There is a great temptation in studies of ICT to capture details analytically by holding everything else constant, providing a kind of static snapshot. A tremendous contribution to the field by scholars has been and will remain identifying dynamic regularities in GGEN, and in the construction of plausible stories out of them. Constructing good ICT policy is hard absent a sure sense of the dynamic trends of the relevant technology, demand and supply and political timing.

Several years ago a group of ICT practitioners and analysts in a dozen African countries met and insisted that what they really needed in order to do their jobs well was to have descriptions of the political and institutional dynamics that surround technology diffusion in sometimes hostile territories. Concretely, they needed stories, specifically ‘war stories’. They wanted nuanced narratives about how stakeholders maneuvered and negotiated, won and lost, in other settings. They knew that ICT successes and failures hinged as much *on timing and sequencing as technology*. Successes require early backing by political figures, the timely mobilization of resources and manpower, and on-time implementation. In response, this author and a team of colleagues developed a dynamic negotiation framework focused on a dozen “critical negotiating issues” that appear sequentially in the dynamic process of ICT diffusion. (Wilson and Wong.)]

We came to understand that these practitioners were asking for two distinct things. One was a simple list of best practices and lessons learned. But they were also making a very human request – give us a story with a beginning, a middle and an end that

we can recognize; a story that corresponds roughly to our own realities; a generic story line onto which we can then hang our own local experiences. Good analytic stories also provide milestones of what to expect next. Having a story line of how things unfolded in other settings provides one with expectations of how things might unfold at home. If Internet diffusion has four stages in most countries, then maybe it will still have four in the next country. When these things happen, and one arrives at the threshold of Phase 2, then one knows what to look for and perhaps even some things to do.

### Downstream Linkages

How do these technologies link to downstream applications like health or tax collection where most practitioners work and most citizens and customers seek services? Scholars can indeed provide great insights into the specific linkages between this particular ICT domain of practice on the one hand, and other substantive areas, like health, education or ports administration. This is especially important for more senior ICT policy makers, since the higher up the chain of command, the more important it is for executives to anticipate and recognize cross-issue linkages, as with ICT and trade or tax collection. This is where their responsibilities intersect with those in other sectors, markets and institutions.

### Freedom.

Finally, at the end of the day, all practitioners whether policy makers, bureaucrats entrepreneurs or grassroots NGO activists want to know how much freedom of action they really have to pursue their interests. In scholarly terms this is a 'structure-agency' problem. That is, what percentage of our possible action is already determined unalterably by the situational givens like income per capita or educational levels? Is our freedom of action illusory in the face of poverty, ignorance and globalization? What can actually be done *inside* the constraints, taking them as given in the short to medium term?

In our Budapest meeting, NGO leaders stated forcefully that by far the biggest contribution scholars could make to their practical work would be to help them distinguish the political from the technical. That is, they are often told by 'experts' that in solving some immediate practical problem certain institutional and authority arrangements are absolutely required by the imperatives of the technology. If you want to use *this* application, then you *must* buy this equipment, pay that much and re-structure your organization along the prescribed lines. NGO practitioners wanted to know how they could do a better job of recognizing what the technology actually "requires" on the one hand, and distinguish between the required and the optional. They want to know where 'politics' and power enter the equation.

The matter of personal autonomy and the practitioner's scope for action leads back to our first issue of 'framing'. This book project began in earnest when we noticed that at one international meeting after another the options for action of non-dominant actors seemed to be grossly underspecified. LDC options were presented that made non-dominant stakeholders either thoroughly choiceless or, equally as unrealistic to us, as perfect masters of their fate. The "options" were stated so narrowly as to rob most actors (especially 'non-dominant' actors) of scope for movement that could be judged realistic and achievable. Either the recommendations said that ICT diffusion was entirely the consequence of technological and economic imperatives, so that LDC managers needn't

worry much. Alternatively, the global IT optimists insisted that since ICTs brought the capacity to ‘leap frog’ into the future, choices were nearly infinite for leaders who would simply seize the time. Both positions were wrongheaded, and this volume is in part an effort to reframe the issues to introduce more realistic options for non-dominant stakeholders, and hence enhance their freedom of action.

## CONCLUSIONS

I have summarized and analyzed the efforts of our authors in the conceptual terms of the original project – guided by the four questions at the core of this chapter. By so doing I hope I have helped to reduce some of the ‘barriers to entry’ in this field, or at least to identify them. Let me restate the questions with a short summary of the authors’ findings.

### **1. Is there a Washington Consensus separate from a ROW consensus?**

Yes. All the usual caveats apply. It is essential when those interested in ICT consider future trajectories and outcomes of international debate and negotiations that in their negotiations nations start with very different policy priorities and substantive positions that reflect their actual and perceived position in the global system, and most especially their own domestic priorities. The ‘Washington Consensus’ emphasized market solutions and efficiency, while the ROW interests stressed equity, access and financing.

### **2. Are the Current Mechanisms Working Well or Broken?**

Some work better than others. It was generally agreed that institutions like ICANN and the ITU need badly to be fixed. There was general agreement that the current system for consultation, policy design and implementation doesn’t work well for Non-Dominant Actors, LDCs as well as NGOs. At the same time, there was equally strong agreement that there is enough flex or space in the architecture of the international ICT governance system to allow the poorer, less powerful players greater freedom of action, and greater scope for getting things they want.

### **3. What Are the impact of the Current GGEN Arrangements on the ROW/LDCs?**

We can’t say precisely because of so many confounding methodological and theoretical factors of data availability, multiple causality, interactive effects, time lags and so forth. We can say however, that preferred balances among public-private ownership, monopoly and competition; market access by domestic and foreign interests; and centralized and distributed government intervention have been conveyed unambiguously and forcefully through a variety of channels and affected local leaders’ incentives to re-structure their entire national ICT systems.

### **4. What Can Scholars and Researchers Do to Help Practitioners?**

Scholars can engage in a variety of different activities that range from reframing the most basic issues of importance to various stakeholders, to providing accurate details and empirical information, to articulating and trying to confirm or disconfirm statements of cause and effect, and so provide practitioners with theories about the way really does work.

Of course, the voices raised in favor of one or another framing and conceptualization of the “New Information Society”, or statements of cause and effect, are nowhere near as neat as portrayed here. One of our authors, in a related paper (Maclean 2004a) points usefully to three broad visions for reforming the GGEN, especially the Internet. Some enthusiasts from inside the Internet community reflect the values and preferences of the early ‘Netheads’. They view the Internet as unique – a special network of networks controlled from edges, which requires minimal governance since the technology makes it largely self-regulating. Technical standards, names and numbers need to be governed and managed, but not much else. [cf Palfrey, et al]

The vision of a second group would extend some of the basic precepts of traditional media into the new media markets. This view agrees that the technical elements must be managed, but insists that other regulatory, financial and equity issues must be addressed in order to ensure equitable as well as efficient performance. Widely accepted practices in telecoms like universal service and cross subsidies should be introduced, and regulatory institutions set in place to ensure the playing fields are leveled and all media are treated the same. This position, which often attracts supporters from LDCs, especially among telecoms professionals, recognizes that the big state incumbents are being squeezed badly by the new entrants and argues they should be given more opportunity to be competitive.

Finally, a third position insists that convergence, digitalization and other technical changes, combined with ‘life or death’ commercial pressures on all firms as their once-distinct markets continue to merge, will create a new kind of dynamic and structure distinct from pure telecoms or pure Internet. The new politics will follow the path of earlier media – broadcasting, for instance – and hence the requirements of governing this difficult transition, and there are antecedents in other periods of transition. To this extent the Internet is far from unique. Other technologies such as the telegraph and television, like the Internet began non-centralized, unconnected technologies, and over time took on similar features of market structure and governance as pressures grew to make distinct applications interoperable with one another across space and time. Going forward the ubiquity of the TCP/IP may keep the Internet more ubiquitous and distributed, but more and more other media will migrate there, creating pressure for unique kinds of governance arrangements. This useful way of framing a tough and complex issue around three ideal typical positions is an example of how a policy intellectual can facilitate stakeholders ability to aggregate common positions.

### **Common Policy Recommendations**

An essential element of this SSRC project was to identify ‘useful knowledge’. This meant asking the scholarly and practitioner participants to make concrete recommendations for action in their specific areas of expertise. The specific recommendations are found in each chapter. Happily, beyond the domain or topic specific recommendations emerged some more general policy-relevant insights that bear on the design of more transparent, democratic and efficient governance arrangements. Some common threads run through the recommendations of the authors in this volume.

1. Current arrangements for rules governing access to essential ICT resources reflect current balances of power within the world system as a whole – they reflect the policy preferences of the powerful.
2. Recognizing real constraints imposed by international institutions and their rules, non-dominant actors like LDCs nonetheless do possess substantial leeway to gain additional benefits under existing rules that most have failed to take adequate advantage of. That is, some ‘excess capacity’ exists to exploit more fully the current flexibilities of, for example, TRIPS (May), yet without fighting to change the basic rules of the game.
3. At the same time, additional rulemaking and amendments to current arrangements should be aggressively pursued that recognize (and compensate for) the distinctive needs and circumstances of transitional and LDCs’ economies –low levels of effective demand, lack of adequate infrastructure, the need to achieve greater market access to developed country markets, high levels of poverty, and inexperience in participating in global ICT forums. The ‘non-dominant’ suffer from unequal abilities to benefit equally from markets.
4. The current ‘universal’ arrangements (whatever they may be) should be fairly applied so *all* countries, and not just the rich, may take advantage of them. That is, the playing field should be leveled, sometimes by arranging the rules so that weaker players can benefit.
5. Global distributional issues receive insufficient attention.
6. Even pro forma, formal participation levels by ROW and stakeholders in international organizations are still way too low in terms of representativeness (and hence long term legitimacy), and the current channels for gauging LDC preferences are flawed.
7. Improvements in technical, representational and consultative capacities also should be taken at the regional as well as the global level.
8. In substantive terms, specific institutional and policy solutions that work in developed country markets are unlikely to work in LDC markets “Developed countries and their firms ought to be more humble and encourage Africa and the rest of the least developed countries to experiment with clever, innovative micro-solutions to technological innovation.” (Cowhey)Solutions appropriate where spectrum use is congested and highly competitive will not work for low-traffic regions, and poor LDCs “do not have large enough [regulatory] staffs” to draw the necessary distinctions when rules are borrowed wholesale. [Cowhey, et al in this volume conclusion]
9. Nevertheless, the International organizations do need to change their structures and ways of doing business. Organizations like ICANSN, for example, could “add a multicultural awareness and outreach advisory committee” to its extant structures. (says MM and Wo)
10. Most importantly, there was a strong, unequivocal conclusion among the authors that a major, if not *the* major roadblock to further progress without which the other problems cannot be adequately resolved is *the weak capacity of ROW stakeholders to organize themselves domestically to draw on the actual strengths they do have*. Citing the “Louder Voices” report, MacLean insists that “the key to strengthening developing country participation in the governance of global ICTs

lies in building technical and policy capacity at the national and regional levels; and...without this capacity changes to the governance structures and decision-making processes of international orgs which are designed to create special spaces for developing countries may mean very little in practice.” As David Souter points out, also drawing from the *Louder Voices* Report, LDCs need a program to advance understanding of the ICT governance issues not just among the handful of ICT cognoscenti, but also among ROW media and research institutes “with the aim of improving the quality of public debate about ICT policy issues and establishing self-supporting networks of expertise within individual countries.”

### **Building Domestic Capacity for Global Governance: The Quad.**

Calls to build stronger capacity for science and technology development are a standard refrain in international development circles. There is also widespread recognition that the road to enhancing international capacities of ROW (especially the LDCs) for effective participation in global governance must start with new ways to enhance domestic capacities. This was an unambiguous conclusion of the authors. However, simply calling for greater domestic capacity to achieve better global governance is inadequate theoretically and practically. A “call to arms” is not a strategic agenda. A more theoretically robust and analytically explicit construct would need to:

- 1) Identify the most important stakeholders whose capacities must be enhanced
- 2) Specify the dominant patterns of relations among them that thwart more effective capacity to participate in global governance for a
- 3) Build a theoretical construct to capture their structural and dynamic aspects and
- 4) Recommend specific interventions to enhance capacities.

Based on my research in Brazil, China, Ghana, Hungary, India, Malaysia, South Africa and the United States, I have developed a four sided model that identifies the key actors and the dynamic, sustained interactions among them, linking the robustness of the relationship among the four nodes with the technical and economic performance of the community or city in which they are embedded. (E. Wilson, 2003 and 2004) That is, the more robust the relations among leaders in the public, private research and non-profit, the higher the performance in knowledge-intensive activities. The Quad Model finds that at the domestic level small sets of individual innovators (for example, in the early days of Internet diffusion) in one sector are motivated to reach out to likeminded “information champions” in other sectors for several reasons: to obtain more and better knowledge and information on the new technologies and their applications; to gain institutional and political support to sustain the new applications; recognizing that the new technological applications will not survive in a hostile political and regulatory environment. Rules, laws and eventually norms must be retooled to be more supportive of the new distributed technologies.

In all countries, from a core “conspiracy” of about a dozen information activists across the four sectors eventually emerges a genuine, broad coalition of domestic reformers seeking a new environment to enable rapid, grassroots ICT diffusion that empowers heretofore disempowered stakeholders. These conspirators begin to build support networks internationally as they do domestically. The local private sector entrepreneurs find international counterparts through bodies like the ICC, GIIC or GBDCe. NGO activities act through sympathetic bodies like the APC. Similarly, researchers and university-based innovators gain political authority and

material support through bilateral bodies like the IDRC, while government officials create global communities of practice through the multilateral and mini-lateral channels I described above. Thus, the national Quad nodes have their direct counterparts at the global level that, when effectively mobilized, can provide material and moral support to help local champions articulate and amplify their positions in global forums as well as local ones. Domestic stakeholders understand that their efforts to influence some international rules of the game may redound back to enhance their status domestically].

Yet what our authors discovered is that the domestic governance structure for governing science and technology, as for economic governance more broadly, tends to be exclusionary and balkanized, with a small handful of government agencies dominating the local scene through conservative “iron triangles” that generally oppose innovation. As such, when it comes time to design new rules and regulations to govern the Internet, for example, the South African, Korean, and other governments are reluctant to consult and coordinate adequately with local NGO, university or private sector experts. Similarly, when governments assemble their teams to attend global governance meetings they rarely include stakeholders from the other sectors, even when those stakeholders possess the knowledge, experience, and their own professional networks that would prove invaluable to participate effectively in global rule-making. In effect, instead of arriving in Geneva or New York with a fully loaded negotiating team, LDCs tend to exclude businessmen, NGOs and researchers, thereby slashing their analytic and action capacities by three-fourths. Instead of capacity building, they commit capacity busting. Meanwhile, the G-8 nations often arrive with all four nodes of the Quad well represented on their delegation. This is partly a question of money, but mostly a question of political will.

One author in the volume (Gus Hosein) does note that domestic actors in different sectors and with different substantial policy concerns are being pushed into more interaction with one another than in the past, as each seeks to deal in its own way with pressures the new technological challenges. He points out that trans-jurisdictional data flows, which even when they focus primarily on criminal matters, now raise much broader questions which fall beyond the traditional interest and competence of the ‘usual suspects’ in the rather narrow techno-legal debates. Civil liberty groups and law enforcement agencies are two examples. Though this dynamic is mainly in OECD nations, he writes that as a consequence, “mass publics are becoming involved in a usually arcane body of law and literature. Accordingly, these international orgs must be more open to promote discourse..[which] must include non-state actors.”

Not only do the domestic changes create pressure for wider international consultation, but Hosein suggests a complement to the usual calls – why shouldn’t international institutions place some obligations for domestic consultation and dialogues on states? “A different approach would be to place pressure on international institutions to require, either through practice, policy or treaty texts, that member states must have national dialogues with interested parties.” This may, he argues, in turn “increase the transparency of the international institutions.” [Hosein]

Cross-sectoral cooperation seems a sine qua non for success in the modern world. The global power of the United States rests as much on the huge successes of California and Cambridge collaborators in public-private partnership as on anything else in America. The same might be said of the remarkable ICT successes of Sao Paolo of Bangalore and even Beijing (which has harnessed research centers, ministries and enterprises [some private, many state-owned]).

A final question is on the nature of the relationships between the governance of global ICT on the one hand, and on the other the governance of other sectors and the international system as a whole. Shaped by technology, markets and the preferences of powerful international actors, the ICT sector is marked by its own specialized norms, expectations, rules, regulations and institutions. These are not perfectly identical with those found in other sectors -- think for example of the rules of the game of the international petroleum sector (Wilson, 1987) Cross-sectoral differences in regimes remain insufficiently explored in the literature. What are the continuities and discontinuities between international ICT norms, practices and institutions, and those of other sectors? By definition, the 'governance of global electronic networks' is a subset of all governance mechanisms that structure behaviors more broadly across sectors and space. The degree of continuity between the governance arrangements in the ICT sectors and in other sectors of the international system is both a theoretical and empirical question that deserve more attention.

Scholars might also review the concrete networks and ties that link ICT to other international activities. What precisely are the channels and pathways between the ICT sector and others, and how will these linkages affect the evolution of the global information revolution? Again, links among finance and bio-technology come to mind, but other global activities from cyber-crime to government security are also directly relevant.

There has been provocative speculation and some analysis (Kalithil and Boas) about the impacts the Internet and other ICT innovations might have on reducing *domestic* democratic deficits. There has been far less interest on possible ICT impacts on global governance. This could be a fruitful line of investigation.

Whether or not ICTs directly alter authoritative global governance institutions through the likes of ICANN or other bodies, the larger and ultimately more important question is whether these new technologies will differentially alter the underlying power capabilities of the actors in the global system. Will Singapore find its net influence increase relative to other nation states like Thailand or France because it has so much more effectively incorporated ICT into its production systems? To what extent will China or India's economic rise and their ability to sustain and project global influence be shaped by ICT diffusion? If so, how will they channel that influence to shape global governance rules? Beyond states, more and more scholars believe that the power of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to affect global outcomes is substantially enhanced by new ICT tools that have the effect of expanding their power relative to states. During and after WSIS we have seen NGOs beginning to flex their muscles and take aim at domestic and global ICT governance arrangements. As we state earlier, the capacities of ROW state and non-state actors to restructure global governance relations will hinge substantially on whether or not they are able to restructure their own domestic cross sector relations along lines that give them more effective leverage in the WTO, the ICANN, OECD or other global institutions. Thus, students of the future evolution of information and communications technologies – their uses and impacts - must become more sophisticated about understanding the links between domestic power and global governance, including the ways they are modified by the new technologies.

The world system today requires more and better forms of global governance to become more efficient. The people in the poor and underdeveloped regions deserve better

forms of global governance as a matter of justice. Better governance in the knowledge society of the future requires creating better knowledge today, with fewer barriers between the producers and users of knowledge, and fewer barricades to the free flow of knowledge across national and other borders. The authors in this project, including the author of this paper, have tried to provide some helpful signposts toward a more open and participatory new global community.

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