The Promise of Civil Society: a Global Movement for Communication Rights

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The essays in this issue are based on a research colloquium that took place on 5–7 May 2003 in the cities of Padova and Venice, Italy. Sponsored by the University of Padova, the colloquium theme was 'Information Society Visions and Governance: the World Summit on the Information Society and Beyond'. The event was intended to serve as an opportunity for communication policy researchers to gather and reflect on research and policy agendas for global communication, in anticipation of the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in December 2003 in Geneva.

Global, or at least transnational, policy making is not a recent phenomenon, although the degree of public participation in global policy forums is arguably on the rise. These essays are focused mostly on the role of 'civil society'—that part of social life that is often distinguished from the state and the corporate sector—in the generation of a worldwide public discourse about the future of communication rights and the global policies that are needed to secure them. Of course, there are grounds for disagreement about how unified this discourse is, given the broad range of issues that have recently been brought under the banner of 'civil society', including questions about: the communication rights of indigenous groups, workers, women, children, and people with disabilities; intellectual property; community media; open-source software; access to information and the means of communication; global citizenship and much more (Civil Society Declaration, 2003). But at the WSIS in Geneva it became clear that there was considerable political will to establish and maintain an effective presence to represent 'civil society', which no doubt will remain the case in future global communication policy forums, including the second phase of the WSIS, which is scheduled to take place in Tunis in November 2005. Before proceeding with a discussion of the role of *civil society* in global communication policy making, I first offer a brief excursus on the historical significance of the concept. For it is helpful to trace its origins as a way of seeing how far this idea has travelled to become a part of the lexicon of a global movement for communication rights.

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The idea of civil society has had a long and illustrious career. Grounded in early modern Western political thought, the concept was a foundation for the articulation of the economic interests of the emerging bourgeoisie, which had begun to assert its independence from the state. In his *Second Treatise* on civil government, published in 1690, John Locke offered his explanation of why members of civil society unite to form a government, the chief reason being the protection of property interests, 'to which in the state of Nature there are many things wanting' (Locke, 1924, p. 180). That reasoning was developed further during the eighteenth-century Scottish Enlightenment, specifically in the writings of Adam Ferguson (1995) and Adam Smith (1993). In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith revealed the foundation of his conception of civil society as one of 'economic man' actively pursuing 'the necessaries, conveniences, and amusements of human life' (Smith, 1993, p. 36). According to Smith, civil society is mediated by a social order constituted by private property, contracts, and 'free' exchanges of labour, and it is the state's duty to protect that order.

Although Smith was very concerned with the moral dimension of civil society—specifically, with the consequences of inequality—his primary preoccupation was with the well-being of the *bourgeois*, or economic man, not the *citoyen*. For Smith, self-interest was the motivating force of individual behaviour, as well as the basis of moral reason and obligation: 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest' (Smith, 1993, p. 22). Smith was emphatic in his conviction that individuals should base their decisions and behaviour not on reason about the good of society but on the pursuit of advantage. And, by doing so, he believed society would benefit. The freedom prized by Smith, and the needs that must be met in order to achieve and sustain it, had to aim above all to accommodate what he viewed as a human 'propensity to truck, barter, and exchange' (Smith, 1993, p. 22).

In contrast to the materialism of Smith, Immanuel Kant believed that the selfish quest to satisfy needs and desires was an inadequate basis upon which to construct a moral order. In Smith's world, individuals treat one another as means to their private ends, and a *just* moral order is the by-product of that selfish pursuit. For Kant, such calculation is morally deficient because it is not grounded in a sense of mutual obligation and respect. Kant's 'categorical imperative' provided a clear alternative in that, while it too prized freedom, one person's enjoyment of freedom should not be the cause of harm to someone else. The moral foundation of Kant's civil society requires that the ends sought by one should not be won at the expense of the well-being of another. Kant believed that an Enlightened, and thereby truly free, citizen is a person capable of exercising the moral autonomy to do right by one's fellow citizens: 'So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law' (Kant, 1997a, p. 28). For Kant, the public sphere is the place in which the private interests of members of civil society can be reconciled with the universal moral obligations of membership in a 'kingdom of ends', a kingdom in which individuals and relationships are treated as ends in themselves, and not simply means to other ends (Kant, 1991, pp. 54–55, 1997b, p. 45). Such a universal principle

imposes a public-mindedness that is missing when we justify our actions strictly according to private interest. It was, for Kant, the proper foundation of a legal order. And, for Kant, the best way to ensure that the ends we pursue are in line with the moral precepts of such a universal maxim would be if we were to submit the ends we seek not to moral dogma but to *public reason*. Unfortunately, Kant did not concern himself with the requirements that would make effective participation in the public sphere possible. Kant's theory of a liberal public sphere fails to adequately account for the role of power, privilege and competence in differentiating among those members of civil society who are more or less likely to be effective in exercising their formal right to reason in public. Kant was insufficiently attentive to the problem of *needs* which, if left unanswered, could stand in the way of participation in the public sphere.

Unlike Kant, Georg Friedrich Hegel developed a theory of politics that treated human needs not only as important but as the defining feature of civil society. In *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991), Hegel characterized civil society as a 'system of needs', the place in which individuals reconcile their particular private interests with social demands and expectations, which are ultimately mediated by the universal state. And the state gives order to the system of needs by ensuring the stability of private property, social class, and the division of labour. In this regard, Hegel was indebted to the classical political economists—to Smith, Say and Ricardo—in his conception of civil society (Hegel, 1991, p. 227). For Hegel, it is not the state but civil society that is best suited to balancing the diverse range of human needs and interests. In Hegel's view, it is wrong to think that the universal state should impose an ideal of economic equality. For it is 'empty intellectualism', according to Hegel, to presuppose that the vast range of particular needs can be reduced to an abstract level while remaining meaningful as objects for mediation by the state.

In many ways the philosophy of Karl Marx is tied to that of Hegel but, unlike Hegel, Marx was far more critical of the idea of civil society. Marx viewed the state as the political consolidation of the bourgeois domination that existed in civil society, and in his 1843 critique of the political achievement of the French Revolution—specifically of the principles of *liberty*, *equality*, and *fraternity* in the 1789 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen'—Marx concluded that 'the practical application of the right of liberty is the right of private property' (Marx, 1978a, p. 42). In 1844, he argued that the antithesis of propertylessness and property should be understood as the antithesis of labour and capital, and that 'the life of private property' is dependent on the conversion of labour into capital (Marx, 1978b, pp. 81, 87). In Marx's view, the formal guarantee of liberal citizenship is premised on the conditions of economic inequality that are inherent in being a member of the bourgeoisie and expropriating the labour of others, rather than on a right to which one is entitled simply because of one's humanity. For Marx, we are degraded by having our humanity so thoroughly identified with being *bourgeois*, and not with being a citizen. In his words, 'citizenship, the *political community*' is reduced 'to a mere *means* for preserving these so-called rights of man' (Marx, 1978a, p. 43; emphasis in original). The state, in this sense, is not a means for the fulfilment of equal citizenship but rather it is a means through which the *bourgeois* is able to pursue his self-interest.

In the twentieth century, the idea of civil society regained status as a radical aspiration, particularly in the writing of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci's concept of civil society is premised on the idea that it is a site of struggle for the legitimate use of state power. Gramsci characterizes political struggle within civil society in military terms, as a strategic 'war of position', in contrast to a tactical 'war of movement', the latter exemplified in violent revolutions to seize control of the state (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 229–245). But the success of a war of movement will not last if it is not preceded or followed by a successful war of position. Furthermore, according to Gramsci, the oppositional activities of 'subaltern social groups' towards the hegemony of the ruling groups are 'necessarily fragmented and episodic', due to their lack of a coherent class consciousness, and their aims can be realized only by the effective seizure of state power. In Gramsci's vocabulary, in order for the subaltern groups to gain control of the state, they must integrate to form a new 'historical bloc' of political, economic, and cultural structures and relations, based on its own counter-hegemony, as articulated and organized by its own organic intellectuals (pp. 366, 377, 418). Anything less than a permanent victory in a 'war of position' reflects the failure of subaltern groups to unify and consolidate their own class power, thus resulting in their continued subordination to the hegemony of the ruling groups. In Gramsci's writings we find a renewal of the idea of civil society, but not by an appeal to the needs of the bourgeoisie. Rather, Gramsci's exploration of the idea of civil society can be characterized as a demonstration of its relevance to the needs of the proletariat.

Gramsci's ideas have had influence well beyond the political and cultural context of his own time. They proved inspirational during the renaissance of the idea of civil society in Eastern Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (Pelczynski, 1988), and they have been contorted into the political theory of 'post-Marxism' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Gramsci's concept of 'the subaltern', although rooted in his analysis of a Western conception of civil society, has also inspired postcolonial and feminist theory (Guha & Spivak, 1988; Fraser, 1990). Yet the idea of the subaltern has also been an object of critique. In her essay 'Can the subaltern speak?' Gayatri Spivak (1988) sympathetically interrogates the use of the language of subalternity to level an important critique of a tendency among Western intellectuals to construct and 'speak for' false solidarity among subaltern populations, and of a tendency to neglect the heterogeneity that exists among subaltern groups. Spivak's point is not to deny the existence of subalternity, but rather to reject essentialist mythologies of development, however well-intentioned their origins. This theme is sustained in her harsh critique of 'global feminism', the latter of which she terms 'the chief instrument of a self-declared "international civil society" that shares the impatience of human rights actions' (Spivak, 2001a, p. 20). The problem, Spivak argues, is one of a lack of 'transnational literacy', wherein human rights interventions often do little to help 'the so-called beneficiary group', and may even inadvertently serve as 'a nasty little weapon, working in the interest of the manifest destiny of the United States as the last best asylum for all' (Spivak, 2001a, pp. 16–17). This frame of analysis, evident elsewhere in Spivak's suspicious approach to the activities and motivations of global NGOs (Spivak, 2001b), further highlights the caution with which she approaches the discourse of the

subaltern. Indeed, it is a graphic illustration of the seeds of the ambivalence about transnational social movements. While seeking autonomy from the state and the market, the social movements that make up what we call civil society are compelled to engage with those institutions (Calabrese, 1999a). Rather than romanticize the autonomy and emancipatory potential of contemporary social movements, perhaps we should join David Harvey (1989, p. 238) and soberly recognize that 'movements of opposition to the disruptions of home, community, territory, and nation by the restless flow of capital' do not fight under circumstances of their own making or choosing, thus explaining their ambivalence.

In much of the contemporary literature on civil society, the term itself carries with it connotations of resistance, if not of radicalism, due in no small measure to the spirit that emerged in the years just prior to the velvet revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. As various accounts during and since that period show, this was a time when there was palpable excitement among Western intellectuals about the promise of civil society serving as the wellspring of a democratic and emancipatory public sphere (Keane, 1988; Cohen & Arato, 1992; Ehrenberg, 1999). Against the repressive forces of official political culture, a vibrant and widespread counter-public emerged, linking artists and intellectuals within and across borders, laying hope not only for a democratic civil society but also for democratic states. Much of that optimism was grounded in the possibilities of the means of communication to serve as lightning rods for the rapid flow of new and empowering ideas, and for the sharing of collective interests, or what Raymond Williams (1989) calls 'resources of hope'. At the time, the range and power of the means of communication—the shifting landscape of technologies and institutions we call 'the media'—combined with a powerful discourse about the promise of civil society. That promise was the impetus for a 1990 meeting in Yugoslavia of media scholars and activists who set as their task to explore the compatibility of the ideas of 'information society and civil society'. The question we posed seemed simple: what democratic potential does the emergence of an information society, however problematic that concept is, offer for the future of civil society? The goal of that meeting was to 'concentrate on some specific and rather controversial issues related to global informatization that are relevant for contemporary discussions of global political and economic restructuring' (Splichal *et al.*, 1994, p. 13). It was not so apparent then how quickly the idea of a *global information society* would subsequently be paralleled by a discourse about *global civil society*.

Transplanted onto a global stage, the discourse on global civil society sets up a challenge to states by drawing attention to the porosity of state power and highlighting, along with the pundits of global capitalism, a radical retreat of sovereignty (Calabrese, 1999b). Of course, the benefits and prerogatives of sovereignty are unevenly distributed across the globe, and whether or not one accepts that sovereignty is in decline, there are clear indications that it has challengers, both in the form of global capital and global social movements. So who are the primary beneficiaries of the relative decline of sovereignty? Is it the global capitalists who prowl the earth in search of cheap labour, low environmental standards and weak tax policies? Is it 'outsourced' labour in the global South, moving from the depressed

countryside to the city to take advantage of new wage opportunities in manufacturing? Is it the great numbers of people across the globe on whose behalf the leaders of global civil society choose to speak? By what standards do we measure the authenticity of representation by those who speak for global civil society? Clearly, the intentions of those who press forward with agendas for the democratization of global policy making (including global communication policy) are noble. And their achievements in terms of gaining access to and modicums of influence within global policy forums are measurably on the rise. But with access comes the risk of domestication and the dampening of critical perspective and radical will, which carries with it the risk of disillusionment, cynicism and withdrawal. That is why it is encouraging to know that, in order to avoid such a risk, the current global movement for communication rights operates on multiple fronts, engaging in official forums run by government bureaucrats, while also taking causes to the streets, practising civil disobedience and using the politics of shame to pressure governments and global corporations alike. Alberto Melucci (1985) has observed that viable social movements never 'exhaust themselves in representation' within formal institutional structures. Rather, movements seek to maintain relative autonomy without institutionalizing themselves (for instance, within political parties) but instead they make society 'hear their messages and translate these messages into political decision making'. This 'enlargement of the public space' is, for Melucci, 'the task for a real "postindustrial" democracy' (pp. 815–816). Today, that enlarged space is transnational in scale. The fact that capitalism increasingly forces new social relations upon citizens everywhere (Calabrese & Sparks, 2004) means that those who struggle for communication rights cannot afford the luxury of ignoring institutional politics that is giving shape to this new world order. At the same time, the impulse to sustain an autonomous and democratic global civil society requires that this struggle not be exhausted or limited by institutional designations of what it means to practise democratic communication on a global scale.

But what are the implications of a global civil society that is not moored to a nation-state that can back its demands? Max Weber famously noted that, in the modern world, 'the state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory' (Weber, 1946, p. 78). Such efforts are often manifested in the government surveillance and censorship of citizens engaging in peaceful forms of political association and expression. But there is a positive side to this story. When a state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force it may also (and often does) claim a monopoly over the space of politics in which civil society may operate. There have always been challengers to the legitimacy of the sovereign state as the space of politics, both at the subnational and the transnational levels, and new uses of the means of communication have excited the political imaginations of radical activists, perhaps on an unprecedented global scale. Of course, exercising such imagination at the transnational level has unique implications, since it potentially challenges the sovereignty claims of individual states. Moreover, the state system generally recognizes the legitimate use of force within the territorial boundaries of individual states. However, unlike claims made by civil society actors that governments may choose to enforce within the territorial limits of individual states,

there is no parallel legitimate monopoly that exists at a transnational level: not UN peacekeeping forces, nor NATO, nor any national government with imperial ambitions. But what civil society actors lack in terms of a clear path to the means to enforce the rights claims they make in the name of social justice, they partially make up for through inventiveness and resourcefulness. Henri Lefebvre (1991) notes that the legitimation of political space does not ensure its vitality as such: 'What, then, of the political status of space? No sooner has space assumed a political character than its depoliticization appears on the agenda' (p. 416). Similarly, Hannah Arendt argues that the space of political action is, by definition, *boundless* in the sense that 'the limitations of the law are never entirely reliable safeguards against action from within the body politic, just as the boundaries of the territory are never entirely reliable safeguards against action from without'. Not only is political space boundless, Arendt writes, it is also inherently *unpredictable* (Arendt, 1958, pp. 190–191). In the context of global politics, the advantage of civil society is due precisely to its ability to overflow beyond predictable spheres of influence by the governments of individual states. That is the greatest source of its power, vis-à-vis a conception of civil society that is defined according to the sphere of state control. At the same time, a global civil society's capacity to transcend aspects of state power also forms the basis for threatened states to selectively challenge and undermine the legitimacy of certain civil society actors. This can be seen in the salience that certain communication rights causes are accorded in supra-national forums, while other causes are left to languish. The work of articulating and struggling for communication rights implies the expectation of some capacity for their enforcement, whether at the subnational, national or transnational level.

The right to communicate has become a cause on a global scale. But there are many things to unpack about this movement. The point of it is not simply to take what remains unsatisfactory about communication rights, or the lack thereof, at local and national scales and force them onto a world stage. The current global movement for communication rights aims to articulate universal principles of social justice *at all scales*. In the United States there has been stepped-up resistance to the rise of cosy back-scratching between government regulators and the industries that are supposed to serve as the watchdogs of government (Calabrese, 2004). In the name of the ideal of a democratic civil society, media watch organizations such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), Free Press and others have become vital conduits to a sustained public dialogue about the behaviour and responsibilities of the media. We have witnessed the global expansion of the Indymedia collective, the growing success of Free Speech TV, and the development of other television and radio networks aimed at providing independent voices that are not beholden to interlocking government and big-media interests. These developments are encouraging signs of a global movement for communication rights that is not focused simply on fitting into institutional moulds that comfort the comfortable.

Naturally, there is room for disagreement about whether this coalescence of diverse needs and interests can accurately be called a social movement, although I am inclined to say that this is the case. If we do choose to characterize it as a movement, is it in full swing, or only at its nascent stage? And if it is in full swing, when did it begin? Perhaps

these questions are simply 'academic' and of no practical significance. But perhaps not. Social movements are, by their very nature, *episodic* and *issue driven*. The episodic nature of a UN-sponsored summit partly qualifies the scope of the civil society role in the WSIS as evidence of a social movement in progress. Of course, this movement is also issue driven, but as the list of concerns raised in the Civil Society Declaration (2003) to the Geneva WSIS illustrates, it is wide ranging, and arguably inchoate and/or incoherent. In searching for a common theme that unites these issues, *social justice* is clearly at the forefront. But does this mean that the civil society representation in Geneva has no special historical significance beyond the global justice frame, or does it have a unique identity of its own? The presence of civil society groups in Geneva clearly represented a call to social justice, but more specifically it was a reflection of and inspiration for global struggles over the right to communicate.

How novel is the current movement for communication rights? Progressive movements for the democratization of the means of communication are not a recent phenomenon (Schiller, 1999), nor is the idea of democratizing access to communication policy forums unique to the push for access to the WSIS (White, 1995). In the 1970s and 1980s, the political imagination had not ranged so widely as to seriously consider the promise of a global civil society, nor had it foreseen the prospects for political engagement with a set of global governance forums that did not yet exist. However, it is difficult to fault the participants in earlier discourses such as the 'New World Information and Communication Order' (NWICO) for having lacked a WSIS-like institutional forum in which to attempt to air their views. In 1980, when the MacBride Commission (2004) first published its report, the Cold War had had a pronounced influence on geopolitical alliances, and the choice to be 'non-aligned' was in reference to this great polarity. Although concerned mainly with intervention at the level of the nation-state, the MacBride Report was preoccupied explicitly with communication as a *basic need* for development:

> All nations have to make choices in investment priorities. In choosing between possible alternatives and often conflicting interests, developing countries, in particular, must give priority to satisfying their people's needs. Communication is not only a system of public information, but also an integral part of education and development. (MacBride Commission, 2004, p. 256)

Much has changed since 1980, not only in global politics but also in global communication. In the wake of the defeat of the NWICO, the path has begun to be cleared for the unobstructed rollout of a neoliberal model of global media development. The withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain from UNESCO during the height of the Reagan and Thatcher regimes was a symbolic gesture that set the stage for a new kind of vision for global media policy, one that sees no exception to culture as a commodity for global trade. That vision was consecrated institutionally in the 1990s by the US-dominated Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (Calabrese & Redal, 1995), resulting in the establishment of the World Trade Organization, in the multiplying bilateral trade relationships that tend to favour the world's largest economies, and in the increasing unilateralism of the United States in many arenas of global political discourse. Today,

the modern means of communication have become the infrastructure that has made possible a far more sophisticated global market system and a new context for the spread of political, economic and cultural ideas. In terms of the institutional possibilities that were imagined for the realization of an agenda for communication rights, the NWICO was a product of its times, but in many ways the aspirations articulated in the 2003 Civil Society Declaration are not so different. Participants in the drafting of that document seek to gain influence in the global governance of media policy in the name of democratic communication. Working with different tools, and in a different context, the recent wave of the communication rights movement naturally has advantages over preceding efforts, but this campaign did not invent the global discourse on communication rights. Rather, it is the heir to a discourse and set of aspirations that long pre-dates recent world summitry (D'Arcy, 1969; Fisher, 1982; Fisher & Harms, 1983). At the core of the communication rights movement lies the widespread recognition that the media are profoundly essential to the fulfilment of human needs and the realization of human dignity in the modern world. In 2003, the Civil Society Declaration to the WSIS presented the need for communication as its central organizing principle:

> We reaffirm that communication is a fundamental social process, *a basic human need* and a foundation of all social organizations. Everyone, everywhere, at any time should have the opportunity to participate in communication processes and no one should be excluded from their benefits. (Civil Society Declaration to the WSIS, 2003; emphasis added)

The progress that we have seen over the nearly 25 years that have elapsed between the time of the MacBride Report and the current approach of WSIS II in Tunisia is a remarkable testimony to the promise of civil society as a democratic 'system of needs'. A democratic global civil society is a promise, not a given, and the global movement for the democratization of communication is a central struggle in that long revolution. This movement seems to have gained considerable momentum through a preoccupation with the policy forum of a UN summit, although it would be inaccurate to say that the movement is entirely policy driven. It is true that one achievement of civil society actors in the period up to and during the Geneva summit was to gain the attention of the organizers and big players, and even to secure a modicum of access to deliberations. But as Seán Ó Siochrú observes, there are steep walls separating civil society actors from the powerful players who control how much access non-governmental, non-market actors will have to global communication policy-making forums. Writing from the perspective of a leader in the efforts to open up the WSIS to civil society participation, Ó Siochrú provides an assessment of how well the WSIS, and its institutional sponsor, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), have lived up to their promise of inclusiveness. He expresses scepticism about whether in fact civil society access to the WSIS is a novel achievement, and indeed whether civil society actors have had a significant impact. One problem he cites is the infiltration of 'the civil society camp' by industry associations that lobby on behalf of large media corporations. Of course, industry associations generally establish themselves with non-profit status, which means they have a superficial similarity to NGOs that

advocate for social causes. In the United States, some of the most effective 'non-profits' lobbying for favourable legislation are the large industry trade associations (Calabrese, 1994). It should come as no surprise that this insidious pattern of power accumulation would metastasize onto the global body politic, blurring the lines that many attempt to sustain between civil society and the corporate sector. Ó Siochrú's observations on this point illustrate how NGOs, which increasingly are identified as the primary constitutive entities of civil society in supra-national forums, are not always necessarily on the side of the angels. Despite this and other concerns, Ó Siochrú concludes with some degree of optimism about civil society, if not in its potential for directly influencing global policy making, then certainly about the organizing and mobilizing potential of global communication activists.

Marc Raboy reflects greater optimism than Ó Siochrú about the potential for members of civil society to have a meaningful impact on the global communication policies now in formation. Raboy sees a thread of aspiration that links the communication rights provisions in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the NWICO, and the current campaign for 'Communication Rights in the Information Society' (CRIS), although he argues that only now have we got it right. He argues that the UDHR and the NWICO are both flawed by their 'exclusive reliance on states and governments as the only legitimate political actors', whereas the participation of civil society groups in the WSIS marks a turning point: 'WSIS is the first UN summit where civil society was officially invited to be a participating partner.' In Raboy's view, also supported by the analysis of Claudia Padovani and Arjuna Tuzzi, the WSIS, with all of its flaws, established a new and more inclusive political space for addressing the problems of global media—a space that is not simply a club for industry leaders and government bureaucrats. Padovani and Tuzzi explore in their essay the 'multi-stakeholder approach' to policy making, as it is manifested in the WSIS. Through an exploratory analysis of the specialized vocabularies employed in the advocacy documents from various groups participating in the WSIS, the authors were able to demonstrate patterns of shared concerns within the 'semantic space' of civil society. It is a valuable empirical description of what we know about patterns of common concern and tendencies for divergence among the interests of civil society groups.

The essay by Ted Magder is also about global communication policy making, but it is not focused on the WSIS. Writing about the International Network on Cultural Policy (INCP), Magder provides a thoughtful and provocative look at the role of cultural policy in relation to questions of global cultural diversity. Magder frames the debate about cultural diversity in terms of collective versus individual rights. Collective rights, he argues, aim for substantive ends, resulting in a quagmire about the very meaning of 'culture', whereas a more neutral and just approach to the question of diversity can be found in a procedural treatment of individual rights of expression. Perhaps the most important challenge that Magder's perspective faces is how to articulate and enforce 'individual rights' in a global environment in which media corporations manage to establish themselves as 'legal persons' for purposes of making claims to rights of free expression. Given how well established the idea of the *corporate person* is in US jurisprudence, combined with the power that the United

States wields in global media policy forums, it will come as no surprise to find that 'individual rights' translate effectively into the rights of media giants, the largest concentration of which hail from that country. The devil will be in the details. But given how little progress has been made in developing cultural policy ideas that are responsive to calls for cultural diversity, this essay offers an alternative that is worthy of careful consideration. Writing against the grain of what progressive-minded policy proposals have tended towards, Magder aims nevertheless at the same progressive ends (cultural diversity), while relying on very different means.

Like Magder's essay, Hans Klein's focuses on a specialized global policy forum, in the latter case the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Klein explores a procedural aspect of policy making, which he calls 'institutional design', and he shows how the design of ICANN has been controversial because of the shifting and not universally satisfactory sources of its legitimacy as a supra-national governing body. Noting the ultimate and 'awesome power' of ICANN 'to disconnect entire country domains from the Internet', Klein observes why the US government fails to confer sufficient global legitimacy on that institution. Klein also explores two available alternatives that were considered at the WSIS, highlighting the limits each poses to the opportunity for civil society organizations to engage in this vitally important arena of Internet governance.

Together, these essays provide an excellent snapshot of an accelerating social movement that may alter its course in ways we cannot yet anticipate. As suggested above, the vitality of political space depends upon the restless energy of the movements that create it, and implies that the political project of a global civil society will always remain unfinished and must always be self-critical. As recent critiques of the idea of civil society counsel, it is imperative that the movement for communication rights be based on cognizance of *the limits of civil society*, that it never assume that the needs of civil society can be articulated by a single, well-tempered voice, and that it operate with the understanding that civil society is not by definition democratic or progressive (Wood, 1990; Kumar, 1993; Young, 2000; Chambers & Kopstein, 2001). Although there will be great value in continued efforts to have a place at the table on behalf of various constituencies of civil society, it is at least as important that this movement is simply raising consciousness around the world, in many sectors of society, about how democratic communication is the lifeblood of all other efforts towards global justice. The recent wave of progressive activism about communication rights is articulating a new vision of civil society, one that aims not only to connect the global, the national and the local but also one that struggles to shift the central organizing principle of civil society away from a Lockean focus on the accumulation imperatives and property rights of the world's elite and towards defining more egalitarian aspirations, including increased opportunities for democratic communication. Whether by design or by accident, the groups who bring their causes to the WSIS and other communication policy forums are calling the world's attention to how vital communication will be for the future of a democratic and egalitarian global civil society.

Acknowledgements

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