

**The impact of Civil Society on the  
United Nations World Summit on the Information Society.  
A Case Study of Successful Engagement  
within UN Bodies.**

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***Nothing is worth more than this day.***

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

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## **Abstract**

The idea for this thesis arose during my participation in the “United Nations World Summit on the Information Society” (WSIS), which was held in Geneva, December 10-12, 2003. The aim of the thesis is threefold: it describes the mechanisms needed for a non-governmental organization to be successful in lobbying its own interests at a United Nations Summit; it presents a case study of an effective non-governmental organization (NGO), which participated at the Summit; and third, it submits a model roadmap for other NGOs to empower them to attend a United Nations Summit, preferably the second phase of WSIS in Tunis, 2005.

This thesis seeks to answer the following questions: What are the factors that enable a non-governmental organization to influence decisions at a United Nations Summit like the World Summit on the Information Society? What are the special requirements for Civil Society members regarding their use of Information and Communication Technology to successfully engage in the decision process of global policy-making?

The research is designed around two scientific methods. On the one hand the qualitative analysis of scientific literature was carried out to explore concepts and theories on this subject; on the other hand content analysis was performed to specifically evaluate the broad spectrum of WSIS and the case study. The collection of data was achieved through offline and online literature research and analysis of secondary literature, and analysis of documents and triage of publications (“grey literature”) gathered at WSIS.

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Project Background and Context Information .....	8
1.2 Research Problem .....	9
1.3 Structure of Thesis.....	10
1.4 Methodological Approach .....	11
<b>2. Information Society as a Civil Society.....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Information Society Overview .....	15
2.2 Analyzing Theories on the Information Society.....	16
2.2.1 Advocates of the Information Society.....	17
2.2.2 Critics of the Information Society .....	19
2.3 Information Society as a useful concept for Civil Society?.....	21
2.3.1 Civil Society Theory .....	21
2.3.2 Civil Society and Global Governance.....	22
2.4 Summary.....	23
<b>3. ICT Policies and Activists.....</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 Development and Current Trends of ICT Policy .....	26
3.1.1 America and the NII Agenda .....	29
3.1.2 Asia (Pacific Rim).....	29
3.1.3 Europe and the eEurope Agenda.....	30
3.2 Public Interest Groups .....	33
3.2.1 From Local Pressure Groups to Transnational Civil Society.....	33
3.2.2 Scholarly Research of Public Interest Activism.....	33
3.3 Summary.....	34
<b>4. The United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1 The Framework of WSIS.....	37
4.1.1 United Nations Overview.....	39
4.1.2 The World Summit Model.....	40
4.1.3 Facilitating Mechanisms.....	42

4.2	The Road to Geneva – Resolutions and PrepComs .....	44
4.2.1	Origins of WSIS.....	44
4.2.2	The Preparatory Process for Geneva 2003 .....	45
4.3	Actors and Themes .....	48
4.3.1	WSIS Participants .....	48
4.3.2	Civil Society.....	50
4.3.3	Non-Governmental Organizations.....	54
4.3.4	WSIS Issues.....	57
4.3.5	Outcome and Consequences.....	61
4.4	Summary.....	63
<b>5.</b>	<b>Case Study: The Youth Caucus at WSIS, facilitated by TakingITGlobal .....</b>	<b>66</b>
5.1	TakingITGlobal.org .....	67
5.1.1	History of TakingITGlobal.....	70
5.1.2	Youth Driven as the Main Factor for Success.....	70
5.1.3	Thematic Engagement Around Major Global Challenges .....	71
5.2	The WSIS Youth Caucus as a Best Practice Model .....	72
5.2.1	Working Structure of the Youth Caucus.....	73
5.2.2	Lobbying Activities of the Youth Caucus.....	74
5.3	NGO Roadmap .....	78
5.3.1	Getting Started .....	78
5.3.2	Capacity Building .....	79
5.3.3	Awareness Raising .....	80
5.3.4	Strategic engagement within WSIS.....	83
5.4	Summary.....	85
<b>6.</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>89</b>
6.1	Summary and Achievements .....	89
6.2	Answers to Research Questions.....	91
6.3	Contribution to Knowledge and Personal Findings .....	92
<b>7.</b>	<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>98</b>

# 1. Introduction

In December 2003 the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) took place. More than 11.000 participants including 44 heads of state or ministers gathered on December 2003 in Geneva at the invitation of the Swiss government to articulate a common vision about the benefits and potentials of information in society and the policies needed to realize them. It was the first time that world leaders placed the issue of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on the agenda of an international summit to produce consensus on the importance of shaping the society we live in, following a constructive way beneficial to all citizens.

Before this first phase of the world summit could take place, extensive work had already been done. For more than two years, delegates of all summit stakeholders met in different places around the world to work on the summit's outcome, a *Declaration of Principles* and a *Plan of Action*, which cover hundreds of topics ranging from access providing, poverty reduction and cultural diversity to intellectual property and freedom of the press. The importance of ICTs to decrease many of the major social, political and economic problems, and the important role that ICTs can play as an essential tool in reaching many of the goals, as expressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, was addressed in all meetings. The Action Plan sets forth a firm commitment to meet concrete targets to "connect the world" and bring the benefits of ICTs to all nations.

The second phase of the World Summit will take place in 2005 in Tunis, at the invitation of the Tunisian government. This time, the emphasis will lie essentially on the major themes of development. There will also be an evaluation of the progress made since 2003 and another Action Plan will be adopted.

WSIS was a premiere in the sense that it allowed Civil Society to actively take part in a United Nations Summit from the first day on. It has not been easy for both governments and Civil Society to get used to the game. The Intersessional Meeting in Paris was clearly a chance to enrich the outcome, but due to differences between both players, which were huge, it nearly failed. Governments had to accept that a lot of specialists of the Information Society were from the civil and private sector, yet accepting them as an adequate partner was unfamiliar to them.

Apart from the above difficulties WSIS was successful for at least some stakeholders. A number of governments from the least developed countries gained recognition for their problems and a number of Civil Society attendees could raise their voices to effectively spread the word on certain issues.

Especially the WSIS Youth Caucus was exceptionally successful – due to diligent preparation and hard work, a youth-paragraph was put into the official Declaration. The work of this group of young people should stand for the possibilities a non-governmental organization (NGO) can have at global events such as a world summit.

While attending WSIS as a youth delegate of the youth organization TakingITGlobal, facilitator of the Youth Caucus, I wondered why Austria's Civil Society was underrepresented in reference to other nations. Realizing the missed opportunity of Austrian NGOs, not only as summit participants, but as active members of a global change that is spreading all around the world, encouraged me to write my thesis on this topic.

The aim of this work is simple yet difficult to achieve. First, I want people to know that there is an Information Society already existing and that we apply and live in mechanisms that most people are completely unaware of. Being conscious of the possibilities ICTs provide us every day and getting empowered to actively participate in global decision-making processes is a goal I hope will come true one day. Secondly, in a more specific way, my objective is to provide NGOs with a tool for getting prepared to participate in a United Nations summit.

The World Summit on the Information Society is twofold. The first chance for involvement has already passed. At Tunis 2005 another option will be ready for action, and equipped with enough resources of knowledge and passion it would be possible – especially for Austrian NGOs – to take a stand in global policy making.

I would like to echo the words of the General-Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, at his opening speech to the World Summit on the Information Society:

*“We are going through a historic transformation in the way we live, learn, work, communicate and do business. We must do so not passively, but as makers of our own destiny. Technology has produced the information age. Now it is up to all of us to build an Information Society.” (Fielding, 2003).*

## **1.1 Project Background and Context Information**

The first time I heard of the “World Summit on the Information Society” was in May 2003. Prof. Robin Mansell (who holds the Dixons Chair in New Media and the Internet at the London School of Economics) held a speech at the University of Salzburg about “Internet and Society”. In September 2003 I attended a conference at Salzburg Seminar, an international forum for the discussion of global issues, titled “Digital Inclusion: Confronting the Information Gap”. There I met various leading experts in their fields of information and communication technology both from government and the private sector as well as from various non-governmental organizations. I also attended the “52nd General Assembly of the International Press Institute” where I gained a broader view of WSIS, especially regarding freedom of the press and the “right to communicate”-issue.

Besides these events, I also got involved with the international youth organization TakingITGlobal, which facilitated the Youth Caucus for WSIS. Due to my commitment as an active member of the Youth Caucus, I worked with other youth delegates to lobby a youth paragraph into the official “Declaration of Principles” at PrepCom3A (Summit Preparatory Committee) in Geneva. In December I also attended the Summit itself, where networking and a deeper understanding of the whole issue were my main tasks.

Being at the forefront at a United Nations summit I met numerous people from all over the world. Through my observations I realized the fact that countries from developing regions were better prepared, had a heavier impact on the agenda and took much more profit out of this event than Austria which clearly missed the chance to take part in this grand event. I made the following observations: high level politicians from Austria were missing, as well as representatives from enterprises and Civil Society, like NGOs or faculty members of universities or other educational organizations.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

Awareness about the Information Society as well as sufficient information on the World Summit on the Information Society is of paramount importance for a successful participation of non-governmental organizations at the second WSIS phase in Tunis.

It is my intention to provide a useful concept of successful engagement within United Nations bodies. Therefore this thesis shall present an effectively realized model for an international NGO, namely TakingITGlobal. With appropriate knowledge is succeeded to implement its own interests in the official output of a United Nations summit.

This thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

What are the factors that enable a non-governmental organization to influence decisions at a United Nations summit like the World Summit on the Information Society?

What are the special requirements for Civil Society members regarding their use of Information and Communication Technology to successfully engage in the decision process of global policy-making?

### **Deliverables and Broader Implications of research**

The aim of my thesis is to achieve the following results:

- Procurement of adequate knowledge about the Information Society, global policy-making, and United Nations summits;
- Encouragement of NGOs from diverse origins to participate at WSIS in Tunis 2005;

- Active participation of Austrian delegates (both government and Civil Society) at the second phase of WSIS II;
- Empowering individuals and especially youth, which often has more knowledge of ICTs than adults, as tomorrow's leaders;
- Enhancement of public awareness of ICTs as tools to improve personal lifestyle, enhance education or strengthen personality and decision making;
- Growing awareness of global issues as well as thinking in broader perspectives.

### **1.3 Structure of Thesis**

This thesis consists of four main chapters and is composed both of a theoretical and an empirical part. After the introduction, which presents the background of my work, research questions and the intended goals, the thesis is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter two contains a literature review focusing on scholarly contributions about the Information Society which were necessary to ground the case study and my research questions. A general overview on the topic is given, including a definition and implications for modern life. Advocates and critics of the Information Society will be presented.

Chapter three provides an overview on e-policies and activists towards a global Information Society. Starting from a historical background, current trends of ICT policy are presented, covering strategies of the United States of America, the Pacific Rim, and Europe. In contrast to policy-making strategies of governments, the emergence of Civil Society as an official stakeholder in global policy-making processes will be presented. Moving from local pressure groups to transnational public interest groups, I want to analyze current scientific research of public interest activism.

Chapter four analyzes the World Summit on the Information Society. It presents the framework of United Nations summits, giving an overview of United Nations bodies, explaining the history of UN summits, and presenting the facilitators of WSIS. The preparatory process will be explained in detail, as well as the topics and relevant participants. An excursus examines the phenomenon of Civil Society and emerging non-governmental organizations. Outcome and consequences of this event will be discussed.

Chapter five presents the analysis of a case study (youth organization TakingITGlobal) and recommendations for relevant action steps for non-governmental organizations to participate in United Nations conferences.

The thesis concludes with a summary and achievements of the thesis. The research questions as well as my personal findings will be answered. The annex contains a list of figures and acronyms besides a complete list of references.

## 1.4 Methodological Approach

### Literature Review

My research is designed around two scientific methods. On the one hand the discourse of scientific literature was carried out to explore the concepts and theories of this subject; on the other hand an analysis of the summit papers was performed to specifically evaluate the broad spectrum of WSIS and the case study of the Youth Caucus. The collection of data was achieved through the following instruments:

- Offline and online literature research and analysis of secondary literature
- Analysis of documents and triage of publications (“grey literature”) gathered at WSIS

Successful research is based on the appropriate use of different sources of information. To achieve objective and unbiased results it is of great value to employ multiple channels. Cooper (1989) argues that informal sources, published as well as unpublished research, should be implemented. He defines literature review as an “...*attempt to integrate what others have done and said, to criticize previous scholarly works, to build bridges between related topics areas, and/or to identify the central issues in a field.*” (Cooper, 1989, 13).

Hart provides a summarizing definition of a literature review:

*“The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed” (Hart, 1999, 13).*

Literature review seen from an American perspective is often used as the opening chapter in research papers. It is both a summary of existing investigation and a personal assessment of results. (cp. Massey, 1996). In this thesis, literature review was applied to find genuine answers to specified research questions in terms of empirical research, rather than as an overview of existing conclusions.

As a scientific instrument, literature review should be carried out in five stages, as defined by Cooper (1989):

- I. Problem formulation: description of research problem, distinction between relevant and irrelevant material;
- II. Data collection: selection of relevant studies (i.e. library, abstracts or on-line searches), knowing the strengths and weaknesses of each type;
- III. Evaluation of studies: report of criteria used;
- IV. Data analysis and interpretation: employed procedures to make inferences about the literature (i.e. applying qualitative and quantitative rules respectively);

- V. Presentation of results: summary of what information was included in literature review by specifying guidelines to separate important vs. unimportant information (cp. 1989, 14).

The written piece of work should *“help the reader understand and make sense of the existing body of knowledge about a specific subject.”* (Snively, 2000). To obtain high scientific standards in a research review, Hsia (1988) suggests two criteria: the first is *“exhaustiveness”*, a practically unreachable ideal in which all relevant data should be compiled, examined and processed: therefore it is wise to narrow down the topic, compile all available data and apply the second criterion, *“selectiveness”*, for the research.

In literature review, all sources of relevant information are legitimate. Due to its great number of folders, media reports, newspapers, articles, and official documents which I gathered at the World Summit on the Information Society, my focus is to analyze and implement findings of so-called *“grey literature”*.

*Grey Literature refers to publications issued by government, academia, business, and industry, in both print and electronic formats, but not controlled by commercial publishing interests, and where publishing is not the primary business activity of the organization. Scientific grey literature comprises newsletters, reports, working papers, theses, government documents, bulletins, fact sheets, conference proceedings and other publications distributed free, available by subscription, or for sale. (Weintraub, 2000).*

Grey literature covers, due to its broad means of dissemination and the flexibility in production, nearly every aspect of the sciences. Especially with the help of the Internet, grey literature has become widely spread and implemented by all kinds of people and often serves as the primary introduction to a topic area.

United Nations agencies or Federal and State agencies are devoted strictly to grey literature that is usually not cited anywhere else. At the World Summit on the Information Society, non-profit organizations and interest groups shared their knowledge via newsletters and special publications to disseminate current information to a wide audience. Besides the official documents produced by government bodies, grey literature from the civil sector influences the research of this thesis to a large extent.

### **Case Studies**

Even though the case study has often been criticized, nowadays it is widely accepted and used as a qualitative research method. Especially in the social sciences, it is utilized to examine contemporary real-life situations. (cp. Soy, 1997). For Yin a good case study is not only a qualitative description but an *“an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”*. (as cited in Soy, 1997, para 1).

Warner distinguishes between two types of case studies: factual ones that describe real people, situations or organizations and (2) fictional ones that are designed by the author. (cp. Warner, n.d.).

Case Studies can be used when a holistic and in-depth investigation is needed, using multiple sources of data. (cp. Tellis, 1997).

There are at least four applications for a case study model:

1. To explain complex causal links in real-life interventions
2. To describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred
3. To describe the intervention itself
4. To explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes (cp. Yin, 1994, as cited in Tellis, 1997)

Case studies do not have to be restricted to problems: they can also show solutions and how-to situations. A case study can address several problems and show what was done right in solving them.

In the 1920s a Harvard University professor wrote the first case study. The "Case Method" taught at the Harvard Business School originally began as a way to import slices of business reality into the classrooms and to describe real-life business situations in order to expand thinking from narrow theory to the world at large. (cp. "The Case Method", n.d.).

According to the Advocacy Institute, case studies can accomplish the following goals:

- Inspiration: examining successful individuals to gain the confidence necessary to take the first steps.
- Knowledge transfer: case studies can teach specific techniques and demonstrate the effectiveness of particular strategies and points out potential pitfalls. Case studies can be used as best practice models to show specific ways others have achieved goals and to demystify success.
- Development of perspective: Understanding the overlap among issues and strengthening strategic planning can both be achieved through the analysis of case studies.
- Model testing: Case studies provide a broad look at strategies presented and make it possible to compare an individual's plan with what has worked for someone else.

These points show the relevance of the case study used in this thesis for potential NGOs that are interested in participate at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis. Best practice examples and the theoretical background can help to close the gap of ignorance on this topic and enable communities and organizations to be active members of Civil Society in order to represent their own interests.

## 2. Information Society as a Civil Society

“Information Age” has settled as the scientific community’s new buzzword which has replaced the term New Media, which (at the risk of oversimplification) comprises technological, economic, or behavioral issues including areas of multimedia, entertainment, and e-commerce. Most writing of the Information Society notes the existence of an *information age*. Slack writes, “An age connotes an all pervasive logic, a logic that requires that everything be explained in its own terms...The information age thus hails all subjects as trapped in its logic.” (as cited in May, 2003, p.3). May further notes that the term Information Age was first identified by Alvin Toffler as the *Third Wave* (Toffler, 1980), in which he defined the third wave as the information revolution that followed two other technological revolutions (the agricultural and industrial). Fifteen years later, Nicholas Negroponte argued that the information revolution is a natural force which makes resistance irrelevant – there is no alternative to *being digital* (Negroponte, 1995). Even though Negroponte focused his approach more on the technological side, proponents of the digital age like Castells claimed that this new age has already arrived. (cp. Castells, 2001a).

Social Science has been researching since the 1960s on forms, uses and implications of information and communication technologies (ICTs). (cp. Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002). Since then research has been shaped by a variety of different backgrounds, frameworks, and theories incorporating mass communication research, cultural studies, political economy, and other influences. However, with the dawn of the Internet as the prime example for new media and the dominating tool of the Information Society, researchers were faced with theoretical and analytical challenges to describe and explain modern society. The social phenomena associated with ICTs are only partially addressed by the traditional theories of media effects, mass audiences, uses and gratifications, diffusion of innovation, or reception theories. (cp. Lievrouw, 2002, p. 4). Undoubtedly, most definitions of new media and ICTs focus on technological features. Contemporary discussions have been indicated to incorporate more on associated social contexts than technological characteristics. Lievrouw & Livingstone (2002, p. 7) list three focal points:

- Artifacts or devices that enable and extend our abilities to communicate;
- Communication activities or practices we engage in to develop and use these devices; and
- Social arrangements or organizations that form around devices and practices.

These three aspects of media technology should be perceived as an inextricable and mutually determining ensemble. The existence of ICTs shaped our society undoubtedly in a positive way; but there are also distinctive social consequences with *ubiquity* as the perhaps most obvious one.

ICTs are ubiquitous in a sense that they affect everyone in society where they are employed, implying the fact that where ICTs are not distributed, or not fairly distributed, a *digital divide* is the result. (cp. Lievrouw & Livingstone, 2002, p. 8).

## 2.1 Information Society Overview

Hardly any term like the Information Society is used that often in social, economic and technology issues. Being a relatively new term there is no common definition for it. The terminology of Information Society must be seen in a whole society context, that signifies a change of structure from a primary good production industry leading to an information, a knowledge and technology based society. (cp. Konert/Knauth, 2000, p. 7).

Nowadays we are living in a world of Informatization, that concerns social development as well as techniques for which infrastructure is indispensable. The result of these societal changes may be seen in the way we conduct our daily lives. (cp. Dordick/Wang, 1993, p. 105). Already 40 years ago Tadeo Umaso, a professor at Kyoto University in Japan, forecasted a new kind of information industry. Later, Harvard University Professor Daniel Bell spoke about the idea of a knowledge based postindustrial society. In 1970 Dordick and his colleagues from University of Southern California mentioned that with the help of ICTs industrialized nations were creating a marketplace based on a network, a marketplace in which information goods and services would be sold and bought as in a real marketplace. In the last four decades we could observe the growth of an information industry and the development of a new economic sector, the information sector. (cp. Dordick/Wang, 1993, p. 1-2).

### Individual and Social Dimensions of the Information Society

Recent qualitative studies have shown that users, consumers and citizens are not only passive recipients of technology, but are actively engaged with information and communication technologies. ICTs are becoming more and more meaningful in use, expanded due to the function of a social form and sign. Following implications can be derived from this thought (cp. Haddon/Silverstone 2000, p. 233-234):

- ICTs can be seen both as objects and media: they have a double function in everyday life as machines, and media of information, pleasure, and communication.
- ICTs can be seen in the same way as material and symbolic objects: *"ICTs are bought and used not just for what they can do but also for what they stand for, aesthetically, in claiming social status or in claiming membership in a group or subculture."* (Haddon/Silverstone 2000, p. 233).
- ICTs are also an element of time and space: the consumption and the use of ICTs influence and are influenced by location in time and space. They are able to connect and disconnect globally. Furthermore they can raise flexibility and control.

- ICTs involve users in an active and passive way: people are increasingly able to interact with ICTs, and even the “passive” use includes choices and discrimination.
- ICTs shift boundaries between public and private spaces: ICTs offer new options and opportunities for citizenship, surveillance and networking. But there is also the endangerment of increased social isolation.

ICTs can be characterized by two main terms: *Universal Penetration* and *Convergence of Social Environment*. Universal penetration refers to effects on geographical patterns like architecture or urban planning, while the convergence of social environment includes work, education, and leisure time. (cp. Maier-Rabler, 2002, November 11).

### **Information Society and Adaptation of ICTs**

The speed and the scale of adaptation in ICTs can be drawn in a few examples. Research has shown that with the introduction of the telephone the young generation experienced hardly any difficulties. Most of them had first contact with this kind of new communication tool at work and as a result it was used at home. Yet, there are still some older people who face difficulties using the phone today. They do not have the relatively developed and relaxed phone manner as their children, nor have they used it in such diverse ways. The same trend is observable with the Internet being a new medium. Nowadays we are standing on the point of more “medium- and short-term” changes. (cp. Haddon/Silverstone 2000, p. 234). ICTs have to find places in our daily routines and environmental rhythms. A well known example is zapping through TV channels, compared to the introduction of television, with only one channel to choose from. New media imply new ways of absorbing. Already in the 1980s numerous writers mentioned that the information revolution will lead to a totally new “Information Society”. (cp. Haddon/Silverstone 2000, p. 235).

## **2.2 Analyzing Theories on the Information Society**

May (2003) identifies three waves of scientific comment on the Information Society:

- an American phase (1960s to 1970s)
- a modernization phase (late 1970s to early 1980s), and
- a global (or Internet) phase (from the mid-1990s until now)

In this thesis, only theories from the global phase will be covered.

### 2.2.1 Advocates of the Information Society

Yoneji Masuda is definitely one of the Information Society pioneers. As a Japanese researcher he analyzed patterns of the Information Society way before Americans and Europeans did. His basic assumption shows that the main difference between the Information Society and the industrial age is the change of focus from material values in industrial production to information values. He proposes that by analyzing the past one can derive and understand the new framework of the Information Society. His concept is intriguingly easy to understand and seems to be a precise description of both societies – the industrial society and the Information Society.

By using a “historical hypothesis”, which claims that *“the past developmental pattern of human society can be used as a historical analogical model for future society”* (Masuda, 2004), Masuda accomplishes to draw an elaborate line that is easy to follow. His model stretches from the Renaissance spirit with respect for human rights and emphasis on the dignity of the individual, to the spirit of globalism, containing the symbiosis between human, nature and social contribution. The pattern comparison of his model are most often comprehensible, but sometimes seem to construct an Information Society that on one side already exists, and on the other side is wishful thinking that could be possible in the future.

Charles Leadbeater even goes one step further than Masuda in shifting the emphasis on knowledge. He is equally enthusiastic about change – they even share same thoughts, for example the *principle of synergy and social benefit*. Leadbeater’s thoughts though clearly reflect a modern lifestyle and the more than ten years difference between both models are noticeable. Leadbeater also derives his theory from life and while describing himself as *“somebody without exact job-profile, neither working for university nor a company”* (Leadbeater, 2004, p. 21), his thoughts affect contemporary thinking in a striking way.

He describes today’s insecurity in life, both private and in business. These forces seem to affect “old” society, enterprises and governments. Public institutions seem to be unable to provide trust and the global financial market widens the gap between the haves and not-haves. Interestingly, Leadbeater not only describes this gap as a technology-based phenomenon, founded in illiteracy or missing education, but tries to answer this problem with *social capitalism*, as the highest force in changing life in modern societies. The other two forces he defines are *finance capitalism* and *knowledge capitalism*. The global financial market, with its deregulated and disruptive power is doomed. The vast switch of resources around the globe destroyed not only trust in the financial market, but also caused bankruptcy and currency crises. Leadbeater is not generally against globalism; instead he promotes a global financial system that is transparent and effective by maintaining global long-term investment flows to emerging markets, while taming speculative operations. Built up on a functioning global finance system, the second force knowledge capitalism, generates new ideas and turns them into commercial products and services.

Leadbeater sees a dynamo for rising living standards and economic growth in creating and exploiting knowledge. Being aware of negative aspects of this second force (like the threat of traditional family structures) he sees knowledge capitalism as the most effective tool to improve life on a global scale. The third driving force, social capital, promotes collaboration. Being in a market economy evolves risk, having a network of trusted partners in all areas implies successful living. Leadbeater specifies Silicon Valley as a major social network, as an example for modern business where companies become “*basic units of innovation and production in the new economy.*” (Leadbeater, 2004, p. 28). The subsumption of these three intangible forces build the framework of the *knowledge society, the well-spring of economic growth and democratic self-governance* (Leadbeater, 2004, (p. 30).

Leadbeater sees the solution for most of the existing problems in turning into a knowledge society where he sees a peaceful joint existence between community and markets. His theory, or better said his vision of an Information Society, is both appealing and realistic to me. Even though its optimistic nature it is far from being an idealistic dream.

Dyson and her colleagues go a step further in designing a *Magna Carta* for the Information Society. With reference to Toffler’s three wave model they promote a knowledge society built upon the third wave with less governmental but free market regulations to build a better life. As it has been the American Dream, a formula for wealth and satisfaction for thousands of immigrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is nowadays the knowledge revolution that promotes individualistic freedom, structures of self-government and a newly defined sense of community.

According to Dyson (et al. 2004), the knowledge society is constructed on four pillars: cyberspace, property, marketplace, and freedom. Cyberspace is defined as the *online world* of our everyday lives. Inhabited by knowledge that is in principle temporary, with the key of software, “cyberspatial warehouses” construct memory that brings both greater opportunities, and in some ways also more difficult challenges. The second column is property, which realizes cyberspace in form of both hardware and knowledge. The authors have strong reservations against today’s efforts of copyright protection, since the origins derive from the 15<sup>th</sup> century of Gutenberg. In the third wave knowledge is a perishable good, which is only valuable for the individual, at the right time under the right circumstances. Unlike mass knowledge of the industrial era (second wave), customized knowledge is the dominating property where copyright and patent processes have to be newly established. This customized knowledge leads to a changed marketplace. *Dynamic competition* among technologies and industries permit just-in-time production for a customized market. As an example Dyson mentions the rise of the computer industry in the United States of America. Corporations like Dell fully understood at an early stage the rules of the *cyberspace marketplace*.

Freedom, as the fourth column, with the meaning of individualization and demassification, is the key to a successful implementation of the third wave. Instead of mass institutions, which promote standardization for higher efficiency and control of power and people, a third wave civilization promotes individual freedom that extends into cyberspace.

After the transition of the second world into the third world, governments will change upside down. Shrunk for about the half, they will have been transformed from centralized power structures to decentralized service institution. To make this happen, the authors propose a set of policy changes which redefine the relationship between government and society. The article of Dyson goes beyond further scholarly research and reads more like a visionary description of tomorrow's future. They promote a pluralistic and energetic model, free of "Big-Brother" attempts, seen so seen nowadays and unscrupulous employed by a lot of governments. However, their liberal view on free markets and weak governments they hardly incorporate today's needs Civil Society.

### **2.2.2 Critics of the Information Society**

One representative of Information Society critics is Langdon Winner, a political theorist who focuses upon social and political issues that surround modern technological change. He stresses the fact that since the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, innovations have had an impact on people's relationship to technology, as well as to political institutions. Inventing a new technology requires people who use it. Often this social factor is left out and causes difficulties within society. Winner criticizes Toffler's "wave theory", stating that these approaches *"often arise during times of technological and social change, accompanied by the ill-founded hopes of 'mythinformation', for example, the expectation that the spread of information machines is somehow inherently democratic and the no one needs to lift a finger to achieve democratization and create a good society."* (Winner, 2004). Winner fears that with the advent of ICTs the social structures within a society shift to obvious drawbacks and disadvantages, especially for ordinary people. He proposes to keep notice of scholars who analyzed inventions and technological change in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Winner argues that whenever new technologies were introduced, a gap between the financial and intellectual elite and the rest occurred. These tendencies of modernism have shaped the Western society since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among them are unequal power over key decisions about what is built and why, the presentation of future as something non negotiable, or individual gratification as something more important than collective well-being. Winner sees in these strong and remaining artifacts tough adversaries for the development of new ICTs to change the world in order to improve personal and collective living. Another crisis arises in missing feelings of belonging to a social group or geographic area. Due to changed working and leisure habits people feel less attached and live a life without any commitments.

Winner draws a rather negative, or I am afraid to say, realistic picture of modern society. He stresses a gap, that not only exists because of missing knowledge of ICTs, but due to the fact that technology itself does not imply a remedy for societal problems that grew over decades in history.

A very interesting concept of information is provided by Roszack (2004), in questioning the hype of information that nowadays occurs in our society. ICTs have become completely ordinary in our lives and when we talk about information we are certainly not aware of the original concept what was behind this term. While working for Bell Laboratories Claude Shannon laid the ground for the discipline of information theory, the science of messages. In the past, the word "information" was always associated with the semantic content of statements. Shannon gave the word a new technical definition, which meant that from now on information is a purely quantitative measure of communication exchanges through a mechanical channel being first encoded and later again decoded. Information was dissociated from its conventional meaning and its sense would be only defined through an appropriate sender and receiver. Thanks to success of information theory, we live in a world where more information than ever is being transmitted. As it deeply involves our lives, for Roszack ICTs nowadays hold the possibility of shaping our thoughts.

Robins and Webster (2004) put the concept of Information Society into a larger perspective. They advise to take a step back and focus on the undoubted informational revolution in regard to history. To understand the shift from the industrialized age to our modern world, it would be wise to disentangle different historical innovations and analyze progress in ICTs in terms of a much longer perspective. They point out that Information Society is often inadequately defined only by technological innovation, rather by (unequal) access and control of information. As there has not been a great change yet in this regard, both authors are skeptical about enthusiastic concepts on it. The prevailing tendency to consider ICTs mainly in an economic and quantitative context should be widened in terms of political and cultural dimensions.

Opposing main theories by describing society in this new information age as more streamlined within elaborate control strategies, the authors depict two "dark side-scenarios". One describes the role of ICT exploitation in the economical domain and secondly, the relation between ICTs, communication and the political system. *Scientific management*, a term leaned from engineering background, applied by Henry Ford at its best, in appropriating information and knowledge within the production process and incorporating it into the technology of production lines to fully achieve control over the production process (cp. Webster/Robins, 2004, p. 68). New technologies provide new mechanisms for control and surveillance, while giving employees a subjective feeling of independency and self-accountability. The current *information revolution* can be understood in Webster's and Robin's view simply as a prolongation of what has happened in the industrialized age with proponents like Taylor, Ford, or Sloan.

Strategies of Scientific Management, produced by *consumption engineers* to regulate economic transactions and consumer behavior are just the same as nowadays multinational corporations to turn the world into a global *network market place*, in which social functions and activities come online.

Furthermore, with the help of ICTs surveillance and narrowcasting (targeted advertising to reach particular segments of an audience), logging data streams on the Internet, and tracking consumer habits in supermarkets become reality. Apart from a *regulated and coded consumer society* the second scenario addresses the role of ICTs in the political process. In a historical context, the combination of social planning and control by implementation of Scientific Management methods, as well as the development of propaganda and public opinion research, depended upon the exploitation of information resources and technologies. Today's development of ICTs is therefore built on the fundament of a political revolution by using information and communication management that changed the public sphere. Modern industries like Public Relations, opinion polling, image production and advocacy would not exist without this historical conjuncture.

## **2.3 Information Society as a useful concept for Civil Society?**

### **2.3.1 Civil Society Theory**

Theorization and debates around the concept of Civil Society have been going on for centuries. However, while there is extensive scientific literature on the Information Society, Civil Society theory is a domain of its own and can hardly be seen in context with ICTs. Recent research focuses on global governance concepts as a theoretical approach to combine both areas.

As Pollock has indicated, "*Civil Society theory is partly the result of the relationship between academia and the construction of political discourse, within the context of increasing media influence.*" (Pollock, 2001, p. 31). He further states that since the last decades, the term "Civil Society" has become almost universal within European politics for the description of political positions, practices, and projects for social and political organization. (cp. Pollock, 2001, p. 32). Even though Civil Society has become a well-known concept of the general public, scientists like Fine criticize the distance between academic discourse and political practice. This is the domain of Civil Society theory, which Fine defines as follows:

*"Civil Society theory is a loosely defined and diverse set of approaches, which emerged in the 1980s ... Its distinguishing mark is that it privileges Civil Society over all other moments or spheres of social life on the grounds that Civil Society furnishes the fundamental conditions of liberty in the modern world. ... Civil Society theory ... is not just a theory of Civil Society but a theory which privileges Civil Society."* (Fine as cited in Pollock, 2001, p. 32).

### 2.3.2 Civil Society and Global Governance

As described above, the concept of Information Society is vastly discordant. Apart from difficulties inside the scholarly field to find one common vision of the Information Society, the civil sector asserts that there is no single model of the Information Society but many "information societies". Civil Society's focus is to enhance social development and especially human rights, which are the only universal framework available. (cp. Hamelink, 2002a).

Since the mid-1990s the term Information Society has been used more and more to specifically underline the social component of the new society. For example, the European Union began to re-regulate and privatize the telecommunication sector. The restructuring efforts were not only arranged in technical terms (like infrastructure) but also on societal development and investment to ensure that people benefit from these changes. (cp. O'Siochru, 2002). A mayor reason for this focus on society from governments around the world is the rise of *global Civil Society*, a counter balance to the process of economic and technological globalization.

O'Siochru sees the global Civil Society as the counterpart of the Information Society, an invention of the globalization needs of governments. This might go too far but I think that the rise of Civil Society was not only due to people's engagement in public policy, but because governments realized that they need to incorporate Civil Society in order to survive and keep their power in an age of upheaval.

A basic misunderstanding exists between the use of "Information Society" regarding the different views of governments and Civil Society. The Information Society seen from a governmental view is often described in terms of ICTs and access to them as ends in themselves rather than enabling tools. The Civil Society model of the Information Society focuses on broad participation, self-determination, and the empowerment of knowledge. (cp. Venturelli, 2001). Hamelink states in this context, that ICT education should go beyond technical training and encourage critical thinking about the social implications of information and communication technologies. (cp. Hamelink, 1999, p. 6). Sen and Mansell describe how these mentioned abilities could reach further than mere ICT literacy. So-called *capabilities* include *"acquired cognitive capacities and the ability to discriminate between alternative choices. These capabilities are the foundations of the freedom which allows individual's needs to be met; needs like remaining health and interacting with others."* (cp. Mansell, 2001, p. 3).

Venturelli further argues: An Information Society seen from a civil perspective lays the *"foundations for the creation and incubation of social institutions from the ground up, initiated by communities themselves, rather than from the top down initiated by arbitrary state power. ... [It] ... accelerates social participation in the construction of knowledge systems and of self-regulatory structures. In the long term, this demand-led model holds the potential for resolving the information gap that neither the state nor the market alone could satisfactorily resolve."* (cp. Venturelli, 2001).

Developing Venturelli's argument it can be argued that a point of contact between Information Society and Civil Society is in the joint work of transnational interaction between state and non-state actors in the framework of *global governance*. The influence of Civil Society in the management of global change is driven by the globalization process, which increases the interrelation of national and global spheres. This is not only caused by global markets and financial flows (as stated by Leadbeater), but also by concomitant citizen action embedded in a global Civil Society. In my view citizen participation and the emergence of global politics framed by the term "global governance" would have not been possible without the rise of the Information Society, arguing with the theory model of Dyson, et al., where the nature of cyberspace has a tremendous impact on our lives and institutions.

The United Nations play a vital role in the promotion of global governance. In an on-going process the United Nations have understood that Civil Society is an expression of the social and cultural complexity of the global community, constituted by a diversity of actors, issues and forms of action. In an inclusive and participatory environment the interaction between Civil Society and the UN system steadily expanded and diversified. The last decade was marked both by an explosion in the traditional patterns of consultation with non-state actors and by the experimentation of innovative forms of partnership and collaboration with the culmination of the organization of the World Summit on the Information Society. (cp. Cardoso, 2003).

## **2.4 Summary**

History has shown that social transitions are usually easier to explain after they have taken place. However, with the rise of a new age, the Information Society, we are facing a world where ICTs and therewith associated social changes affect all dimensions of our lives, including the economy, politics, the social system, and our culture.

Research on the Information Society was made since the 1960s where the implications of information and communication technologies were studied, especially in disciplines like mass communication research, as well as cultural and political studies. Since the beginnings a big handicap of scholarly research has been to focus mainly on the technological impact, rather than on social effects within society. Contemporary qualitative studies frequently concentrate on the social dimensions of the Information Society, expanding ICTs in the function of a social form and sign.

This chapter only focuses on recent theories from researchers with tremendous influence on the scientific discussion of the Information Society. All of them feature a different point of view on this topic, helping to obtain a broad picture of current research on the Information Society: Yoneji Masuda presents a very methodological frame where he opposes the industrial age with Information Society. The concept is very analytical and tries to cover all dimensions from both eras, yet with this reduction of each module to fit into his defined patterns, he might ignore the real complexity of this topic.

Leadbeater's approach stresses the economical side of the information revolution, criticizing nowadays' financial markets and stressing the importance of knowledge. Leaving the hardware-centric "old age", he proposes a fast-paced environment with flexible, intelligent people and the ideal of an entrepreneur to guarantee success and prosperity. Leadbeater presents a very appealing Information Society, yet he cannot hide his influence of Silicon Valley's new economy.

The most extensive model of an Information Society is presented by Dyson et al., who are sure about the rise of the third wave – a paradigm created by Toffler in the early 1980s. The only question for them is who will shape this new civilization to replace the second wave, stamped by industrialization.

More than Leadbeater, the authors emphasize the individual in a demassified working world with decentralized service institutions as former governments. The promotion of a renewed American Dream is without doubt interesting, however, liberal societies pay tribute to the needs of common people who do not have the chance to jump on the train of this modern world.

Especially the concern of a equitable social society is the driving criticism of authors like Winner, who perceives the Information Society only as a partial concept. Winner is no objector of the Information Society per se, but urges to be aware of the societal changes that often discriminate ordinary people. His concerns are well reasoned and stress the fact that technology alone does not imply the cure for societal problems.

Robins and Webster ask the same question, whether new ICTs really justify the utopian rhetoric with which they are promoted by industry and the majority of the scientific community. In presenting a genealogy of ICTs from the industrial revolution to the development of mass production, they describe the role of ICT exploitation in the economical and the political domain. Mentioning the "dark sides" of modern technology in, for example surveillance and consumer tracking, they bring light into a discussion that is normally hidden by governments and corporations.

With the background of recent theory the question, if the concepts of Civil Society and Information Society share common values is raised. In my opinion the answer to this question is certainly positive. Even though most Civil Society members are unhappy about the definitions of both terms information-, and Civil Society, by underlining the diversity of the population, it is without doubt that the concept of Information Society occupies space for a global Civil Society within the concept of an Information Society. Affirmation can be found in the sincere efforts of the United Nations to promote global governance with the incorporation of Civil Society in global policy-making processes.

### 3. ICT Policies and Activists

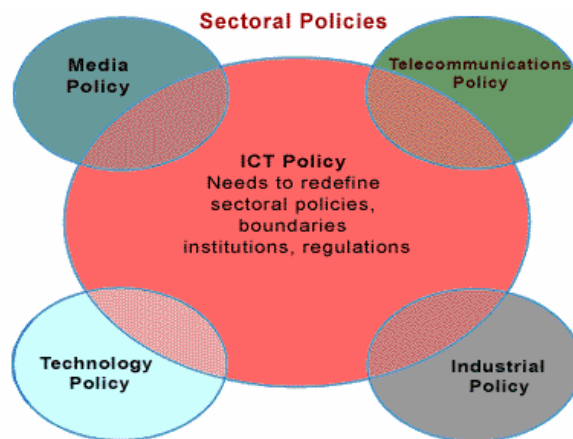
#### What is the meaning of ICT policies?

“The term ‘information policy’ has been used to refer to policy initiatives that promote the use of tools and concepts associated with the “global Information Society”, with a view to realizing their potential in achieving national, social and economic development goals. In many cases, integration of the national economy with the global knowledge-based economy is one of these goals.” (IDRC, 2003).

“The Oxford English Dictionary defines policy as ‘A course of action, adopted and pursued by a government, party, ruler statesman, etc.; any course of action adopted as advantageous or expedient’. While this definition suggests that policy is the realm of those in power – governments or official institutions – a wider sense includes the vision, goals, principles and plans that guide the activities of many different actors.” (Nicol, 2003, p.10)

Generally ICT policy covers three areas, which are telecommunications (especially telephone communications), broadcasting (TV and radio), and the Internet – be it national, regional or international. On each level distinct decision-making bodies are free to produce different or sometimes even contradictory policies.

#### Sectoral Policies



(Mansell, R. & When, as cited in James, T. (2001). An Information Policy Handbook for Southern Africa. A Knowledge Base for Decision-Makers. Retrieved March 25, 2004, <http://www.apc.org./books/ictpolisa/ch1/ch1-1.htm>)

Figure 1: Policies for shaping an integrated ICT Structure

According to Mansell and When (as cited in James, 2001) *“the need integrating national ICT strategies overlaps with four well-established policy fields: technology, industry, telecommunications and media. Sectoral policies such as education, employment, health, welfare, etc. are increasingly having to address issues relating to ICTs and the growing interdependence between the development of ICT policies and sectoral policies.”* Experience has shown that in absence of an all-encompassing ICT policy, creations of sector-dependent policies show up that become firmly entrenched with its sector and latter attempts to unite them becomes difficult. (cp. Mansell and When as cited in James, 2001).

Generally policies are formally put in place by governments. Nevertheless different stakeholders, and in particular the private sector, drafts input into policy process and thus affects certain outcome. For example the influence of multinationals has grown enormously. Furthermore, due to the privatization of state-owned companies governments rarely have control over telecommunications anymore, with the result that privatized telecom companies are often partly controlled by foreign shareholders which are seeking to enforce their own interests. Large corporations as well as merged companies intensify this trend in the context of globalized markets. They are often more powerful than developing countries' governments, allowing them to shape the policy-making process. Policy is also influenced, or even decided by companies and institutions. (cp. Nicol 2001, 11). To cite an example, Mexico was considering to adopt free software in its education system. Microsoft Corporation offered the Mexican government the opportunity of money and free licenses, which certainly dropped GNU/Linux and embraced Windows completely. (cp. Nicol 2001, 12). According to the Wall Street Journal, groups of companies and industry organizations undertook a campaign to stifle Internet-privacy legislation. They created the Online Privacy Alliance (<http://www.privacyalliance.org/>) headquartered in Washington. In their campaign they attacked legislative proposals on the following three fronts: identifying expensive burdens, raising questions about how any United States Internet law would apply to non-Internet industries, and assuring lawmakers that privacy is best guarded by new technology, not new laws. Members of this alliance include Microsoft Corporation, AOL Time Warner Inc., IBM Corporation, AT&T, BellSouth, Sun Microsystems Inc., the Motion Picture Association of America, and the United States Chamber of Commerce. (cp. Nicol 2001, p. 12).

### **3.1 Development and Current Trends of ICT Policy**

Talking about information policy, it must be clear that policy approaches differ from country to country. Information policy has been developed in different countries alongside other variables such as level of economic development and historical context.

Rowlands (as cited in James, 2001) divided information policy into three hierarchical levels:

- Infrastructural Policies
- Vertical Information Policies
- Horizontal Information Policies

Infrastructural Policies: deal with the development of national and regional infrastructure, required to support and force an Information Society. Without any infrastructural policies and implementation strategies it would be virtually impossible to provide any vertical or horizontal ICT-related policies.

Vertical Information Policies: include sectoral policies such as education, tourism, manufacturing, and other services.

Horizontal Information Policies: refer to a broad aspect of society. For example relating to freedom of information, tariffs and pricing, and the use of ICTs by government internally and in relationships to citizens, business, labour, academia and other fields of life. (cp. IDRC 2003, p. 1).

One of the first attempts to sign a national data superhighway was designed in 1991 with the *High Performance Computing Act (HPCA)*. Al Gore, former Vice President of the United States noticed that there was a radical change in business, in public interest groups and in government, caused by new information communication technologies. That was the reason to rethink and restructure the Nation's communication law. The plan to reconstruct parts of communications infrastructure, comes in part because of changes in telecommunications, in entertainment, education communities and other sections of economy and private sectors. The *National Information Infrastructure Act (NII)* has expanded the discussion and encompassed a broader view, which stands for the *Global Information Infrastructure (GII)*. Both the NII and the GII have led to a broader framework regarding networks, information appliances, hardware and software, information services and applications, as well as human resources. (cp. ARL, 2001).

One of the key points of the former United States President Clinton was the development of the NII. The implementation of the NII and the GII has been a priority for many agencies. The NII is an agenda including a series of proposals that will advance the development of National Infrastructure. Key principles seek to:

- promote private sector investment;
- extend the "universal service" concept to ensure that information resources are available to all at affordable prices;
- act as catalyst to promote technological innovation and new applications;
- promote seamless, interactive, user-driven operation of the NII;
- ensure information security and network reliability;
- improve management of the radio frequency spectrum.

- protect intellectual property rights; coordinate with other levels of government and with other nations; and
- provide access to governmental information and improve governmental procurement. (ARL, 2001).

For the development and the implementation of the above mentioned goals and tasks, the *Information Infrastructure Task Force* was founded by the American Administration, which is divided in three sections:

Telecommunications Policies: which formulate administration positions on key telecommunication issues. For example to ensure that all Americans have access and can enjoy the NII.

Applications: develop, demonstrate, and promote solutions in information technologies providing health care, governmental services, libraries, and other parts of public and private areas.

Information Policies: cover the field of Property Rights, Privacy, and Government Information. (cp. ARL 2001).

Al Gore's goal was to create an "information superhighway" in order to keep the United States on the cutting edge of technology and far ahead of other countries. But not only Americans were able to create and improve their own telecommunication sector and system. Another player was on its way to build and extend his information sector: Singapore. (cp. Sandfort 1993). According to Sandy Sandfort, Singapore and its avowed national policy is to become the world's first "intelligent island". In 1990 one of Singapore's milestones was the development of "The Next Lap", which adopted a policy of strategic use of information technology to efficiently deliver services, increase competitiveness and improve the quality of all people living in Singapore.

In 1992 Singapore created a strategic document which was called the *IT2000 Masterplan*. It was the third in a series of national plans, before the *Civil Service Computerisation Programme* in 1981 and the *National IT Plan* in 1986. One of the main goals of the IT2000 Masterplan was to create a world-class *National Information Infrastructure* (NII), to support and improve applications envisioned under IT2000. Furthermore the decision to provide nationwide broadband network was soon to become a major milestone. (cp. IDA 2003). The focus to create und stimulate ICT resources for their societies is set on the three key players within the Triad of the USA, Asia (Pacific Rim) and Europe.

### 3.1.1 America and the NII Agenda

Today we are living in a global economy that is increasingly information intense. Nearly everyone agrees that an advanced information infrastructure is the key to economic growth and value creation. (cp. Egan as cited in Malhotra, 1995). Companies in all industry areas are using information technology to become and keep globally competitive. Considering the vital role of the information and communication infrastructure, and realizing that the national telecommunications and information policy had not kept pace with the latest developments in telecommunications and computer technology, the United States Administration determined that there was a need for accelerated deployment of a *National Information Infrastructure (NII)*. (cp. Clinton as cited in Malhotra, 1995). One aim was, that all Americans should take part on the construction of an advanced National Information Infrastructure (NII), to force a seamless web of communications networks, computers, databases, and consumer electronics. Development in new communication technologies and the NII can unleash an information revolution, synergies and new resources that lead to societal change the way people live, work and interact with each other. (cp. Brown, 1993).

*“An advanced information infrastructure will enable U.S. firms to compete and win in the global economy, generating good jobs for the American people and economic growth for the nation. As importantly, the NII can transform the lives of the American people -- ameliorating the constraints of geography, disability, and economic status - - giving all Americans a fair opportunity to go as far as their talents and ambitions will take them.” (Brown, n.d.).*

In my opinion the above mentioned and promoted agenda from the USA was also a encouragement for other countries and states to initiate their own action plans, like the European Commission with their *eEurope* initiative, and Asia with the *Asia Pacific Information Infrastructure (APII)* programme. On the other hand they have to respond in any case, because the market of new information and telecommunication technologies is a fast and competitive market that is getting more and more important for national and political economies.

### 3.1.2 Asia (Pacific Rim)

Asian countries and their economies are diversified in stages of development. Japan belongs to the strongest nations regarding economy and development. Japan heads the most advanced countries within the “Pacific Rim”. A reason for their strong economy and growth seems to be the cooperation with the Tiger States such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and others (cp. Hernádi/Taniguchi 2001, 6-7) Another Asian player on the economic sector and additional tiger to strengthen the Asia-Pacific community is the *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)*. APEC is the premier forum for facilitating economic growth, cooperation, trade and investment in the Asia-Pacific region.

APEC has got 21 members like Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, The Russian Federation, USA and so on. (cp. APEC 2003). Within APEC there is implemented the *Telecommunication and Information Working Group (TEL)*.

TEL is responsible for the improvement of the telecommunication and information infrastructure in the region and the facilitation of effective cooperation, free trade, and for sustainable development. (cp. APEC TEL WG 2003).

*“TEL's Program of Action covers implementation of the e-APEC Strategy, implementation of the Digital Divide Blueprint for Action, promoting policy and regulatory measures to liberalize trade and investment in the telecommunications and information sector, e-security, e-government, mutual recognition arrangements for the conformity assessment of telecommunications equipment, human capacity building and an active dialogue with the business community” (APEC TEL WG 2003).*

The APEC Telecommunication Working Group has been founded in the year 1990. *“Four steering groups on liberalization, business facilitation, development cooperation, and human resources development, propose, implement and monitor projects and activities to advance the overall goals of APEC.” (APEC TEL WG 2003).*

In 1995 the first Ministerial Meeting on Telecommunications and Information Industry was held in Seoul, Korea. APEC ministers agreed to advance the information infrastructure and to establish the *Asia Pacific Information Infrastructure Cooperation Center (APII)* in the region. (cp. APII CC 2003). APII CC is a cooperation of APEC which aims to coordinate joint endeavors of APEC member economies in order to build the *Asia Pacific Information Infrastructure (APII)*. APII intends to link economies in the region with an advanced telecommunications network. It offers and supports various cooperative activities and pilot projects for early realization of APII. Furthermore it provides member economies with assistance necessary to develop their information infrastructures. (cp. APII CC 2003). APII CC aims to facilitate the advancement of the APII and to promote cooperation among APEC member economies.

### **3.1.3 Europe and the eEurope Agenda**

Since the early 1990s Information Policy and Society has become more important within the European Union. *“The Information Society is on its way. A new digital revolution is triggering structural changes comparable to last century's industrial revolution with the corresponding high economic stakes.” (European Commission, 1994, para 1).* This was the introductory sentence regarding new information and communication technologies. At that time the prevalent assumption was that this process eventually would lead to a knowledge-based economy and society.

The European Commission created a White Paper which was called the “Growth, Competitiveness, Employment – The challenges and ways forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century”, basically with the intention to implement a Task Force on European Infrastructure. (cp. European Commission, 1993). The succeeding Bangemann-Report (Bangemann-Commission, 1993) built on the White Paper's analysis and elaborated a vision of Information Society with focus on market mechanisms as a driving force.

In 1999 the European Commission had published “eEurope - An Information Society for All”. The intention was to bring benefits of new information and communications technologies to all Europeans. The initiative was focused on ten priority areas which will be listed later. The key objectives of the eEurope Initiative are to bring every citizen, home and school, every business and administration, online and into the digital age. Therefore creating a digitally literate Europe, supported by an entrepreneurial culture ready to finance and develop new ideas. Furthermore to ensure that the whole process is socially inclusive, builds consumer trust and strengthens social cohesion. To achieve these objects the European Commission has given 10 priority areas for action:

European youth into the digital age: introduce and bring Internet and multimedia tools into schools and adapt education to the digital age;

Cheaper Internet Access: provide a broader competition to reduce prices and boost customers' choice;

Accelerating e-commerce: accelerate implementation of legal framework and expand use of e-procurement;

Fast Internet for researchers and students: to ensure high speed access to the Internet thereby facilitating co-operative learning and working;

Smart cards for electronic access: facilitate the establishment of European-wide infrastructure to maximise uptake;

Risk capital for high-tech SMEs: develop innovative approaches to maximize the availability of risk capital for high-tech SMEs;

“eParticipation” for the disabled: to ensure that the development of the Information Society takes full account of the needs of disabled people;

Healthcare online: to maximize the use of networking and smart technologies for health monitoring, information access and healthcare;

Intelligent transport: safer and more efficient transport through the use of new ICTs.

Government online: to ensure that all citizens have easy access to government information, services, and decision-making procedures on-line. (cp. European Commission, 2000a)

Following the action plan eEurope 2000, the European Commission modified certain aspects and issued "eEurope 2005 – An Information Society for all" followed. "The main goal of *eEurope 2005* is to provide favourable environment for private investment and for the creation of new jobs, to boost productivity, to modernize public services, and to give everyone the opportunity to participate in the global Information Society.

The eEurope 2005 initiative aims to stimulate secure services, applications and content based on a widely available broadband infrastructure. (cp. European Commission, 2002a). The plan is based on two groups of action which affect each other. Firstly it aims to stimulate services, applications and content, covering both online public services and e-business. Secondly it deals with broadband infrastructure and security matters. In 2005 Europe should have modern online public services like:

- e-government
- e-learning services
- e-health services

as well as a dynamic e-business environment. To enable these goals, widespread availability of broadband access at competitive prices and a secure information infrastructure should be established. The eEurope 2005 plan is looking for such areas where public policy can provide an added value. Hence, some key targets are:

- connect public administrations, schools, health care to broadband;
- offer interactive public services, accessible for all, and offered on multiple platforms;
- provide online health services; and the
- removal of obstacles to the deployment of broadband networks;
- review of legislation affecting e-business;
- creation of a Cyber Security Task Force.

Another intention of the European Commission is to force and realize the eEurope 2005 plan to exchange experiences of good practices and demonstrate projects in order to share the lessons from failures. Furthermore policy measures will be reviewed and better focused by benchmarking. This action plan should serve as a proposal for Member States. It also contains an invitation to the private sector for working together with the Commission and Member States, realizing the objectives of eEurope. (cp. European Commission, 2002a, p. 4-5).

## 3.2 Public Interest Groups

### 3.2.1 From Local Pressure Groups to Transnational Civil Society

Policy making used to be a governmental task. Issues were decided in plenary halls not open to the public. In an age of growing democracy, it has become increasingly important for governments to open themselves to the civil sector to successfully pursue their policy agendas. Governments are increasingly learning to communicate within a multi-stakeholder environment not only to accomplish their interests but for their national and international reputation. The United Nations World Summit on the Information Society was the first governmental event in history where non-governmental actors like private industry and Civil Society became directly involved into a political process. It has been a long way for Civil Society to become an acknowledged partner of governments.

There is a long history of studying public policy in scholarly research – starting at least from de Tocqueville in the 19<sup>th</sup> century until more recently research on social movements in political science, history and sociology. (cp. Mueller, et al., n.d.). In comparison to the past with international policy-making in a small world of formal negotiations, nowadays more and more people are able to participate in the process of shaping international policy. Among other topics, examples for successful engagement of transnational activism in global policy formation are: human rights, environmental issues (including climate, food, and genetic engineering), health (including AIDS and tobacco), and labour in the apparel and sports equipment industry (so-called “anti-sweatshop”-movement). (cp. Mueller, 2002). Apart from constructive activism, there is a great deal of concern regarding aggressive social activists who have expressed their opinion on global summits as it happened in Seattle, Washington, or Genoa. These advocacy groups have been labelled “anti-globalization movement groups” or “flat-earth-advocates” by governments and media. (cp. Hamelink, 2002b, p. 251).

According to Mueller (2002), social activism started at a local level in form of *interest groups*, and before 1970 as *pressure groups*. These groups were active on a homogeneous national and institutional structure focussing local issues. While local groups continued to work in their fields, a new form of public interest activism emerged. Generally, there is not a very good understanding of this so called *transnational Civil Society* that affects global policy through collective action. Research is not yet equipped with theories on how institutions respond to and they keep being changed by global advocacy groups.

### 3.2.2 Scholarly Research of Public Interest Activism

Main research input on how organized groups shape politics and policy are provided by political science and communications science. Especially political science thoroughly studied this topic and developed theories and models.

Recent research from Berry (as cited in Mueller) distinguishes between interest groups that are economically motivated, such as lobbyists, labour unions and trade associations, and *public interest groups*. These groups “seek a collective good, the achievement of which will not selectively and materially benefit the membership or activists of the organization.” (as cited in Mueller, 2002, p. 2). Public interest groups work for the public welfare in transforming contending private interests into a broadly based opinion of the public interest.

Another aspect is characterized by Calhoun (as cited in Mueller, 2002), who defines public interest groups as *new social movements*, a well known wording that made its way into the media. For Calhoun, these social movements act outside recognized institutional channels and focus more on identity, autonomy, and self-realization, than on economic interests. The concept of Civil Society lies one analytical level above interest groups, in such a way that it implies autonomous social action wherein interest groups spontaneously can grow, shrink, split, merge, and compete for citizen’s attention. (cp. Mueller, 2002). Mueller argues that the term “Civil Society” has started to be autonomous from its primal origin. Nowadays “Civil Society” is increasingly misused as a class terminology for a cohesive, global interest group, where a set of some advocacy groups involved in global policy making represent Civil Society as a whole. Therefore the term “Civil Society” has become a synonym for liberal or progressive advocacy groups. However inaccurate such usage might be from an academic point of view, this use of symbols demonstrates the scientific concept of social movements in creating a collective identity to advance their goals. (cp. Mueller, 2002).

Due to the focus of journalism and mass communication research communications science only has a short history regarding political process, interest groups, or social movements. Since the 1990s there have been efforts to analyze Internet-related activism by a number of researchers. However, most of this literature considers the Internet merely as a tool of activism rather than for policy-making. Mueller (2002) therefore draws two conclusions. First, he sees almost no connection between communications literature and political science literature. Secondly, communications research on advocacy and policy-making is case-oriented and focuses on mass media politics. Communication research nowadays is very much active in the area of *Internet governance*, which concentrates on the administration of key resources of the Internet’s infrastructure: domain names, IP addresses, Internet protocols, and root servers. Internet governance was one of the hard-fought topics at the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva.

### **3.3 Summary**

Concurrently with the introduction and development of new information and communication technologies in the early 1990s, a consciousness for the adoption and implementation, for the use and the consequences of such techniques started to evolve. These circumstances definitely affected economy, policy and institutions.

One of the first action plans for e-policy came from the United States of America with their National Information Infrastructure Act (NII). The main aim of the NII was to facilitate and advance the development of National Infrastructure. Asia and the Pacific Rim followed quickly.

Asia for example created a big cooperation regarding the information infrastructure sector, which is called the Asia-Pacific Information Infrastructure (APII). Their taskforce TEL (Telecommunication and Information Working Group) consists of the Asian Tigers and Dragons which aim to improve the telecommunication and information infrastructure in this region and to facilitate effective cooperation and free trade for a sustainable development.

The European Union also designed an agenda for development and advancement on the information and telecommunication sector. As a supranational initiative, eEurope was established by the European Commission. Main goals of eEurope are to ensure the access for all citizens of the European Union to new information and communication technologies. Europe should be able to work with the new digital techniques and get more experience. Additionally the initiative should ensure that all people will be reached to get a positive relation for ICTs. The background motivation for the eEurope action plan is the intention to become one of the most competitive and dynamical economies of the world. With support and new possibilities ICTs offer, the above mentioned aims should be realized and applied in the future.

All policies implemented from governments generally aim at economic growth and support concepts with the two major technological determinants, *access* and *literacy*, to bridge the *Digital Divide*. In this context Maier-Rabler argues that successful ICT policies “...*must provide equal chances for all citizens in all ... states to acquire the essential capabilities to make informed decisions in the context of ICTs.* Maier-Rabler (2002, p. 15).

Apart from governmental policy-making, the civil sector increasingly pushes its own interests on a global scale forward. From local pressure groups to national and regional public interest groups, nowadays the so-called “transnational Civil Society” has a strong stand in international policy issues and effectively drafts own language in important conventions like the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society. There is a long history in scholarly research on public interest activism, especially in political sciences. Communication science was a long time not active in policy research, but since the 1990s got very much involved, amongst other things, in the area of Internet Governance.

## 4. The United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

There has been a striking change from the 20<sup>th</sup> century which marked the Industrial Society with its innovations like steam, electricity and other technologies that changed everybody's life. It literally was a revolution. With the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century another dynamic process promises a fundamental change in all aspects of everyday lives – a new revolution with implications for technology, communications and information on society, politics, economy, culture and environment. The Information Society we all live in right now has not arrived suddenly. It was an evolving process in which some are already living within and others who will experience over the next decades. (cp. Moraitis, 2003).

The United Nations Development Report warned that gains in productivity produced by new technologies may widen differences in economic growth between the rich nations and those that lack the skills, resources and infrastructure to invest in the Information Society. The term *Digital Divide* is referred to this dilemma. (cp. Norris, 2000). Norris (2001) defines several dimensions of the digital divide: the social divide (the gap between the "information-rich" and "information-poor" in nations); the global divide (the gap between industrialized and developing countries); and the democratic divide (those who use the Internet for civic participation versus those who are passive consumers of Internet resources).

These impairing disparities that divide the globe must be bridged. The United Nations has brought world leaders together to address disparities between rich and poor countries. In September 2000 the United Nations Millennium Summit was held to set clear targets for reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women achieved by the year 2015. The result of this summit was a Declaration called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Summit's Declaration outlines following commitments in human rights, good governance and democracy:

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
  2. Achieve universal primary education
  3. Promote gender equality and empower women
  4. Reduce child mortality
  5. Improve maternal health
  6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
  7. Ensure environmental sustainability
  8. Establish a global partnership for development
- (cp. United Nations General Assembly, 2000).

The United Nations World Summit on the Information Society was called to be a meeting at the highest political level to develop a common vision and an understanding of the Information Society and its derived challenges.

## **The Challenge to talk about ICTs**

*“The Internet is a communication medium that allows, for the first time, the communication of many to many, in chosen time, on a global scale. As the diffusion of the printing press in the western world created what McLuhan called the ‘Gutenberg Galaxy’, we have now entered a new world of communications: the Internet Galaxy” (Castells, 2001b, p. 2).*

The new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) produce fundamental changes in the way today’s society lives, learns and works, creating upheavals within traditional organizations and institutions as well as on all political, economic and social levels. Adama Samassékou, President of the Preparatory Committee of WSIS, states that there is also a dark side of this new society: the major part of humankind this new society is faced with numerous difficulties when it comes to connecting to the Web. He states that *“Nineteen per cent of the world’s population account for 91% of Internet users. And even in the industrialized countries, the social digital divide leaves many citizens on the sidelines of the digital revolution.” (Samassékou, 2003).*

The United Nations recognized in its Millennium Declaration the obvious need *“to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed.” United Nations General Assembly. (2000, September 18).* With reference to Samassékou’s work as the President of the Preparatory Committee he states three challenges that the World Summit on the Information Society seize:

1. The Summit’s first challenge is the transformation of the Digital Divide into digital opportunities for all, particularly for the major proportion of the world’s inhabitants living in the southern hemisphere.
2. The achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals through the optimal and proficient use of new technologies must be accelerated.
3. The global wealth of cultural and linguistic diversity should be promoted and the use of ICTs exploited in order to empower illiterate people enabling them to become a part of the knowledge society.

ICTs do not provide a solution in themselves but should be seen rather as a tool in the service of individuals and social groups. (cp. Sammassékou, 2003, p. 8).

### **4.1 The Framework of WSIS**

The United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process began in 1998 when the United Nations International Telecommunications Union (ITU) formally proposed the summit.

Then in December 2001 the United Nations General Assembly formally authorized it to be held two years later, in December 2003. (including a second phase in Tunis in November 2005.) The United Nations assumed a new form for the WSIS. The incorporation of Civil Society and the private sector should be more pronounced than at any previous summit. In addition to the official summit, more than 200 events were held to provide an opportunity for policy discussions and to present practical ideas and solutions. In any summit the most intense activity occurs in the preparatory phase.



(WSIS Executive Secretariat. (2003b). World Summit on the Information Society Brochure. Retrieved March 12, 2004, from <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/brochure/wsis.pdf>)

Figure 2: The Preparatory Process of the WSIS Geneva Phase

In the two years between the formal authorization of the WSIS and the actual event, the ITU conducted two series of meetings: preparatory committee meetings (“PrepComs”) and regional meetings. Prepcom I followed within six months of the General Assembly Resolution, and PrepComs II and III were held at additional six month intervals. Between PrepComs I and II the ITU organized regional meetings in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe/North America. (cp. Klein, 2003).

In addition to the rather formal procedure of a United Nations Summit, the principle of inclusion has been firmly rooted in the very process organizing the WSIS. One of the original features of this summit lies in the nature of the Information Society, as Sammassékou (2003) explains. While falling within the framework of an intergovernmental process, the WSIS is open to the private sector, Civil Society and international organizations, involving them fully in the preparatory work and in the summit itself.

Recognizing this very attracting and new concept there are also difficulties implied. As Marc Furrer, Swiss State Secretary states:

*“Everything depends on us, as delegates. And on the involvement of the stakeholders and of their co-operative attitude to contribute to the process. Governments and the International Organizations will not be able to achieve any tangible results without the active participation of the other stakeholders, the private sector and the Civil Society. This makes this summit again different from other summits, as the private sector is the driving force of ICT development.*

*Resolution 183 of the General Assembly recognizes this particular situation and attaches great importance to the participation of Civil Society. In the final analysis it is the Civil Society – citizens, industry, consumers and academics – who apply ICT, be that as users, consumers, or producers. Only in this way can we incorporate concrete and substantial recommendations into the action plan.” (cp. Furrer, 2002).*

#### **4.1.1 United Nations Overview**

After World War I, the world was split up. President Woodrow Wilson suggested a world forum, the League of Nations, which was dissolved soon after its formation. When World War II ended in 1945, world leaders agreed that an international forum to resolve disputes had to be developed to avoid further destruction.

The United Nations were founded 1945 in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization where the United Nations Charter was signed by a majority of attending representatives of 50 countries. The Charter provides the institutional framework for the organization, setting out the rights and obligations of member states, and establishing the organization's organs and procedures.

The preamble of this document contains the well-known beginning: *“We, the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...”* (United Nations, 1945). Among the broad range of activities the central purpose is the maintenance of peace and security, the first aim set out in Article 1 of the Charter. (cp. Baehr, 1992, 20).

The United Nations are structured in six principal organs:

The General Assembly: represents all member states with equal vote and is the main deliberative body of the United Nations.

The Security Council: is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Decisions of the Security Council are legally binding for all member states, even though five of the permanent members may exercise veto power.

The Economic and Social Council: coordinates all UN agencies and commissions and issues policy recommendations to the UN system and to Member States.

It has three objectives to promote: (a) higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development; (b) solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems, as well as international cultural and educational cooperation; and (c) universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.

Trusteeship Council: has to supervise the administration of Trust Territories placed under the Trusteeship System. All Trust Territories have attained self-government or independence and therefore the Council suspended operation on November 1, 1994.

The International Court of Justice: is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, located at the Peace Palace in the Hague, Netherlands. The Court is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms of office.

The Secretariat: carries out administrative work of the United Nations. It is headed by the Secretary-General, who is appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Security Council for a five-year, renewable term. (cp. United Nations, n.d.)

Grouped around the United Nations itself are more than twenty intergovernmental agencies which focus on particular economic, social or cultural programmes. These agencies are geographically decentralized in following cities: New York, Geneva Vienna, as the UN headquarters and in Washington, DC, Paris, Rome, Montreal, Berne, London and Nairobi with at least one agency. (cp. Baehr, 1992).

#### **4.1.2 The World Summit Model**

After the Cold War a new global policy institution emerged: the world summit. World Summits organized by the United Nations address such global issues as environment, housing, or food. Each Summit is planned and executed in a similar way: they bring together thousands of people from diverse backgrounds such as governments, industry, and Civil Society, to foster discussion on broad matters and to produce collective statements of principle and action. (cp. Klein, 2003).

Klein (2003) proposes in his World Summit Model that its pattern consists of a set of preparatory activities, a pattern of participation, and the summit products. A world summit generally lasts just a few days, but the preparatory and follow-up processes occur over a period of years.

A summit event can be distinguished by certain patterns of participating groups: governments, industry, and Civil Society. The most high-profile participants are heads of state. Summits attract a high participation of national leaders, which in return offers the opportunity for collective decision making by the world's assembled political leadership. With so many decision makers at one table, the possibility for a globally scaled and coordinated political action can be often accomplished.

Since 1992 the United Nations has hosted the following Summits:

1992	Earth Summit (Conference on Environment and Development), Rio de Janeiro
1993	Human Rights Summit (Conference on Human Rights), Vienna
1994	Population Summit (International Conference on Population and Development), Cairo
1995	Social Summit (World Summit For Social Development), Copenhagen
1995	Women's Summit (Fourth World Conference on Women), Beijing
1996	Habitat II (Conference on Human Settlements), Istanbul
1996	World Food Summit, Rome
2001	World Summit Against Racism (World Summit Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Other Related Intolerances), Durban
2002	World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg
2003/2005	World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Geneva/Tunis

(United Nations, Office of the President of the Millennium Assembly. (2001, August 1). 55th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Reference document on the participation of Civil Society in United Nations conferences and special sessions of the General Assembly during the 1990s. Retrieved March 11, 2004, from <http://www.un.org/ga/president/55/speech/civilsociety1.htm>)

**Figure 3: United Nations hosted World Summits**

Even if there is no agreement at least participating heads of state render world summits as major media event ensuring that issues raised there will receive extensive press coverage throughout the world. Apart from the attending members comprised of sovereign nations, the United Nations offer participation for other sectors as well. Traditionally, industry is the second most important player after governments, with private firms sending large numbers of representatives. Industry can play a more important role in some summits than others, such as those on housing, food, and environment. Civil Society or Non-Governmental Organizations are the third group of participants in these events. Interestingly, NGOs often hold considerable expertise in the policy topics of a particular conference. For example, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro attracted hundreds of environmental NGOs from all around the world.

Next to its rather closed nature, the 1992 Earth Summit attracted over seven thousand journalists alone, and in turn provided intensive coverage in print, radio, and television. With so much attention given to the event the whole world has the opportunity for remote participation, tracking the final stages of maneuvering that occur at a summit and gaining familiarity with the issues. In this way the ideas discussed at a summit can promote global awareness and understanding. (cp. Klein, 2003).

Next to process and participation, Klein (2003) also defines a product in the World Summit Model. For him, a Summit produces understanding and a collective vision. The final documents describe problems, solutions, opportunities, and actions in the summit's topic area.

As a result of the output of these papers, a derived vision is intended to inform concrete policies. More specifically, nearly all summits produce two final documents: a Statement of Principles and a Plan of Action.

*“A Statement of Principles articulates the normative framework for policy, often building on the United Nations charter and previous statements on rights. It can also refer to earlier established rights, affirm their applicability to specific issue areas like development or women, and even propose their expansion to new areas. A Plan of Action translates principles into more specific actions. A Plan might define high-level policy initiatives, set milestones for implementation, or call for funding of program areas. While certainly not a detailed statement of policy suitable for immediate implementation, summit documents provides the broad outlines of comprehensive policy on the summit topic.” (Klein, 2003, p. 4.).*

The final step in the Summit Model contains the Follow-up Conference. After five years, a so-called “summit-plus-five” event assesses the progress of implementation of the Plan of Action. (cp. Klein, 2003).

Klein (2003) identifies two features of summits: their characteristics as a policy forum and the mechanisms available to them for policy implementation.

- I. Summit as forum: A precondition for policy making is the existence of an appropriate forum. The characteristics of the forum affect what kind of policies can be produced. Essential characteristics of any forum are threefold - jurisdiction, legitimacy, and timing. They depict what kinds of policies can be effectively advocated.
- II. Implementation mechanisms: world summits produce statements of principle and plans of action with both formal and informal implementation mechanisms. Most formal implementation mechanisms are United Nations agencies or governmental organizations. Informal implementation mechanisms include political resources created by world summits that influence other policy processes. World summits generally do not have a strong record of implementation.

This is due to the fact that they have addressed some of the biggest problems of humanity (food, shelter, development) where no one can expect a summit to easily achieve significant social change in these areas.

### **4.1.3 Facilitating Mechanisms**

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was coordinated by a high-level Summit organization committee (HLSOC) with the mission to coordinate all activities around the United Nations (UN). It has been established under the patronage of Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

It consists of a representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, various UN special agencies, the Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Executive Secretariat of the UN Regional Economic Commission, and the President of the World Bank. The chairman of the HLSOC is the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), currently Yoshio Utsumi.

The Executive Secretariat of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS-ES) was set up under the authority of the HLSOC to support the preparatory work for the Summit and is based at the ITU headquarters in Geneva. It is staffed by personnel from the member states, UN special agencies, the private sector, NGOs and Civil Society. It is led by Executive Director Pierre Gagné. Switzerland, as the host country, has set up its own Executive Secretariat, in which expert civil servants are preparing the Summit. A professional conference organizer has been entrusted with the logistical tasks. (cp. WSIS Executive Secretariat, 2003b).

The WSIS context is tripartite: it seeks to create an exchange platform between governments, Civil Society and the private sector. The great diversity of Civil Society, comprising the large number of organizations and the vast array of interests, require the setting up of a Civil Society mechanism that can ensure optimum representation in all aspects of the WSIS process. To respond to this need, a Civil Society Bureau (CS Bureau) has been created during PrepCom 2. The role of this Bureau is to facilitate Civil Society participation in the Summit. The CS Bureau is comprised of various "families" that are seen to represent different constituencies within global Civil Society. These families include: Education, Academia and Research; Science and technology community; Media; Creators and promoters of culture; Cities and Local Authorities; Trade Unions; NGOs; Youth; Gender; Volunteers; Indigenous People; Networks and Coalitions; Multi-stakeholders Partnerships; Philanthropic Institutions; Think Tanks and People with Disabilities. (cp. Kleinwächter, n.d.).

DELIVERABLES	MODALITIES	SECRETARIAT
Share common vision Declaration of Principles	Regional Meetings → PrepComs → Summit	HLSOC ITU WSIS-ES
Share objectives Plan of Action	CS Bureau	

(cp. Draft Road Map to Tunis. (n.d.). Retrieved March 12, 2004, from [http://www.itu.int/council/wsis/Geneva\\_04/Tunis-RoadMap.doc](http://www.itu.int/council/wsis/Geneva_04/Tunis-RoadMap.doc))

Figure 4: Structure of the World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva Phase

The financial basis of the WSIS is defined in Resolution 56/183 from the United Nations General Assembly, where the international community is invited *“to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund established by the International Telecommunication Union to support the preparations for and the holding of the Summit, as well as to facilitate the effective participation of representatives of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, in the regional meetings to be held in the second half of 2002, in the preparatory meetings to be held in the first half of 2002 and in 2003, and in the Summit itself.”* (United Nations General Assembly, 2001).

Next to financial support voluntary contributions from all stakeholders, especially from UN Volunteers staff, were in high profile both at the Summit in Geneva and in the preparatory meetings. The WSIS Civil Society Bureau also established a volunteer group to bring together organizations working with information technology and with volunteers to provide input to the Summit.

## **4.2 The Road to Geneva – Resolutions and PrepComs**

### **4.2.1 Origins of WSIS**

In the year 1998 the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) resolved in Resolution 73 to instruct the ITU Secretary-General *“to place the question of the holding of a world summit on the Information Society on the agenda of the United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination”* and *“to report the Council on the results of that consultation.”* (International Telecommunication Union, 1998). The ITU Secretary-General indicated in his report to the 1999 session of the Council on that consultation, indicated that interest in being associated with the preparation and holding of the Summit had been expressed. It was decided that the Summit would be held under the high patronage of the United Nations Secretary-General, with the ITU taking the lead role in preparations.

In 2001, the ITU Council decided to hold the World Summit on the Information Society in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva (Switzerland) from 10 to 12 December, 2003. The second phase will take place in Tunis (Tunisia) from 16 to 18 November, 2005.

In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly recommended in Resolution 56/183 that *“preparations for the Summit take place through an open-ended intergovernmental preparatory committee, which would set the agenda of the Summit, finalize both the draft declaration of principles and the draft plan of action, and decide on the modalities governing the participation of other stakeholders in the Summit and invited Governments to participate actively in the preparatory process of the Summit and to be represented in the Summit at the highest possible level.”* (United Nations General Assembly, 2001).

It was also stated that the General Assembly “*encourages contributions from all relevant United Nations bodies, in particular the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, and other intergovernmental organizations, including international and regional institutions, non-governmental organizations, Civil Society and the private sector to contribute to, and actively participate in, the intergovernmental preparatory process of the Summit and the Summit itself.*” (United Nations General Assembly, 2001).

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 56/183 describes the purpose of the Summit as being the “*development of a common vision and understanding of the Information Society and the adoption of a declaration and plan of action for implementation by Governments, international institutions and all sectors of Civil Society.*” (United Nations General Assembly, 2001).

Following cases were decided upon:

- To harness the potential of knowledge and technology for promoting the goals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration
- To put this potential at the service of development for all
- To call for a meeting at the highest political level, for the development of a common vision and understanding of the Information Society
- To convene under the patronage of the Secretary General of the United Nations with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) taking the leading role, along with other UN bodies, international organizations, as well as the host countries Switzerland and Tunisia
- To encourage participation of the private sector and the Civil Society in the Summit and its preparation
- To invite the international community to make voluntary contributions to the special trust fund for the Summit (cp. United Nations General Assembly, 2001).

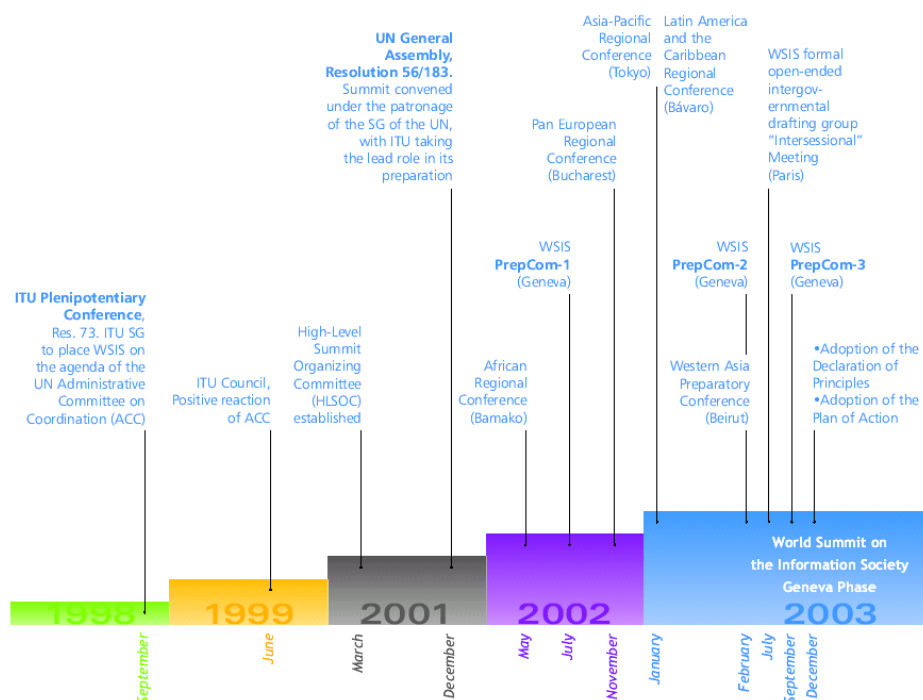
#### **4.2.2 The Preparatory Process for Geneva 2003**

A series of Preparatory Committees (PrepComs) defined the agenda and themes of the Summit. Adama Samassékou, former Minister of Education of Mali, was elected as president of all PrepComs.

A substantive input has already been made by the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (cp. International Telecommunication Union, 2002), which proposes a framework with the following three objectives:

- I. Providing access to ICTs for all: How can the benefits of ubiquitous and affordable ICTs be extended to all the world’s inhabitants? How can those that have access to ICTs be helped to use them effectively?

- II. ICTs as a tool for economic and social development – and meeting the Millennium Development Goals: The development of ICTs has implications for economic, social and cultural development. How can ICTs be leveraged to help promote the common goals of humanity, such as those expressed in the UN Millennium Declaration?
- III. Confidence and security in the use of ICTs: The benefits of ICTs can only be fully harnessed if there is confidence that these technologies and networks are reliable and secure, but not misused. What steps should be taken to build confidence and increase security? (cp. WSIS Executive Secretariat,2003b).



(WSIS Executive Secretariat. (2003a). Helping the World to Communicate. Retrieved March 12, 2004, from [http://www.itu.int/wsisis/docs/brochure/wsisis\\_communicate.pdf](http://www.itu.int/wsisis/docs/brochure/wsisis_communicate.pdf))

Figure 5: The Road to Geneva

### WSIS Preparatory Committee meetings (PrepComs) - all held in Geneva, Switzerland

- PrepCom-1, 1-5 July 2002
- PrepCom-2, 17-28 February 2003
- PrepCom-3, 15-26 September 2003
- PrepCom-3, Resumed Session 1, 10-14 November 2003
- PrepCom-3, Resumed Session 2, 5-6 December 2003, and
- PrepCom-3, Resumed Session 3, 9 December 2003

- Intersessional Meeting between PrepCom-2 and PrepCom-3: 15-18 July 2003, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (France).

### **WSIS Regional Conferences**

- WSIS Africa Regional Conference, Bamako, Mali, 28-30-May 2002
- WSIS Pan European Regional Conference, Bucharest, Romania, 7-9 Nov 2002
- WSIS Asian-Pacific Regional Conference, Tokyo, Japan, 13-15 Jan 2003
- WSIS Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference, Bavaro, Dominican Republic, 29-31 Jan 2003
- Western Asia Preparatory Conference, Beirut, Lebanon, 4-6 February 2003

### **Conferences related to WSIS**

- Bishkek-Moscow Sub Regional Conference, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 9-12 September 2002 and Moscow, Russia, 23-24 October 2002
- Mauritius Conference on Access to ICTs by All, Pointe aux Piments, Mauritius, 5 April 2003
- 1st Conference of the Ministers on Information & Broadcasting in the Asia-Pacific Region, Bangkok, Thailand, 27-28 May 2003
- Pan-Arab Regional Conference, Cairo, Egypt, June 2003
- World Information Technology Forum, Vilnius, Lithuania, 27-29 August 2003
- World Summit of Cities and Local Authorities on the Information Society, Lyon, France, 4-5 December 2003
- CERN - The Role of Science in the Information Society, Geneva, Switzerland, 8-9 December 2003

PrepCom-1 laid the foundations for the preparatory process. It decided on the Rules of Procedure of the Preparatory Committee, and on the arrangements for accreditation and participation. All five Regional Preparatory Conferences produced final documents which constituted the building blocks for the first drafts of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action. At these conferences governments, intergovernmental organizations as well as accredited Civil Society and business sector entities worked closely together.

Drafts were discussed at PrepCom-2 where governments decided on a formal procedure for inputs from all stakeholders. The WSIS Executive Secretariat received more than 900 pages of contributions from governments and observers, and compiled the individual contributions in a reference document. This compilation formed the basis for a refined version of the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action, which was submitted to the Intersessional Meeting in Paris. The first part of PrepCom-3 was held from 15 to 26 September 2003 in Geneva. It approved the Rules of Procedure for the Summit, as well as the Summit agenda and format.

A number of issues in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action remained unresolved and required further negotiations. For this reason, PrepCom-3 suspended the session and reconvened during the week of 10 to 14 November (PrepCom-3A), to continue negotiations on the two texts. Open questions, especially on human rights issues forced a third meeting on December 9, one day the WSIS started. (cp. WSIS Executive Secretariat, 2003c).

## 4.3 Actors and Themes

### 4.3.1 WSIS Participants

	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Entities Represented</b>
<b>States</b>	4590	176
<b>International Organizations</b>	225	50
<b>UN Bodies</b>	620	37
<b>UN Agencies</b>	347	13
<b>Non-Governmental Organizations</b>	3310	481
<b>Business</b>	514	98
<b>Guests</b>	471	
<b>Media</b>	970	631
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11047</b>	<b>1486</b>

(WSIS Executive Secretariat. (2003). Statistic from the World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva Phase, from 10-12 December, 2003. Available from WSIS Newsroom, <http://www.itu.int/wsis/geneva/newsroom/index.html>)

**Figure 6: Statistic of Attendance from WSIS, Geneva Phase**

According to the WSIS Executive Secretariat (2004, February 18):

- 176 member States were present at the Summit, with 50 Heads of States, Governments and Vice-Presidents
- The European Community was represented in conformity with the rules of procedure of the Summit
- 21 entities having received a standing invitation to participate as an observer in the sessions at the Summit and the work of the General Assembly
- 5 regional commissions were represented by observers
- 37 United Nations bodies and programmes were represented by observers
- 13 specialized agencies and related organizations were represented by observers
- The United States Virgin Islands was represented as an associate member of regional commissions by observers
- 25 other Intergovernmental Organizations having received an invitation and participated as observers

- 481 Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or accredited to the Summit during its preparatory process also attended
- 3.300 representatives from Civil Society attended the WSIS
- 98 business entities and International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Sector member accredited to the Summit during its preparatory process also attended
- more than 1000 media representatives covered the Summit

The World Summit on the Information Society heralds a radical change from previous United Nations global conferences. It is the first time that a summit is open for active Civil Society participation: This multi-stakeholder process was intended to foster social inclusiveness and to reflect the universal nature of an interconnected society. Governments, Civil Society, the private sector and non-governmental organizations were active players in this process. In a 2003 article, Fröhlich argues that the multi-stakeholder contains potential for conflict; the question of how to organize a summit with so many different stakeholders' interests like governments and NGOs is difficult.

The World Summit on the Information Society consists of following stakeholders:

### **United Nations Family**

The United Nations family of organizations serves the WSIS as a catalyst for change by bringing together state governments, as well as the private sector, international institutions and Civil Society in pursuit of common goals. The United Nations system and its specialized agencies were deeply involved in the organization and holding of the Summit, with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) taking a leading role.

### **Governments**

Every government bears the primary responsibility for its own development, creating an Information Society from an unique starting point. However, all governments have a stake in the global Information Society, regardless their level of national income or their infrastructure facilities. The WSIS is a chance to pursuit innovations for the public interest, in raising awareness for ICT, facilitating access to information for the public, and to lay the foundations for all citizens to benefit from Information and Communication Technologies in terms of improved quality of life, social services and economic growth. (cp. WSIS Executive Secretariat, 2003b).

## **Business Entities**

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) created the Coordinating Group of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) as a vehicle through which to mobilize and coordinate the involvement of the worldwide business community in the processes leading to and culminating in the Summit.

The Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI), is constituted of eleven international organizations; among them are the Business Council for the United Nations (BCUN), ITU members from the private sector and the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The contribution of the private sector is instrumental in creating the material conditions for universal access to information and value-added ICT services. Its involvement in the Summit will promote economic growth and new partnerships, technology transfer, increase awareness of new technologies, and motivate the creation of local content development and skilled employment opportunities.

ICC incited the private sector to play an active role and to provide substantive input into the Summit, offering an economically viable model to achieve the development objectives on the world agenda. The private sector also put strong efforts in the preparatory phases and at the Summit itself.

## **Civil Society**

International Civil Society has put significant efforts in the WSIS process to develop a vision of a global society and to finding ways to realize that vision through the use of ICTs. Invited by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to take part in the WSIS multi-stakeholder approach, Civil Society members from all over the world contributed their share to put weight often on other issues than governments to balance the WSIS in terms of encompass a broader reflection of the potential inherent in the combination of technology and knowledge. (cp. Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2003b).

### **4.3.2 Civil Society**

The United Nations system defines Civil Society as followed:

*"A 'Civil Society' is the result of different components of populations and communities, and refers to the sphere in which citizens and social initiatives organize themselves around objectives, constituencies and thematic interests. They act collectively through their organizations known as Civil Society Organizations which include movements, entities, institutions autonomous from the State which in principle, are non-profit-making, act locally, nationally and internationally, in defence and promotion of social, economic and cultural interests and for mutual benefit. They intermediate between their constituencies/members, with the State as well as with United Nations bodies.*

*They do this through lobbying and/or provision of services. Though belonging to the non-State actor category, they are different from the private sector and NGO as they may not be registered, may replace the public sector, are not always structured and often their members are not officially recognized". (Alegre, A. G., personal communication, March 16, 2004, Report on the Transition Period between phase 1 and 2).*

In the tripartite WSIS context, which seeks to create an exchange platform between the State, the private sector and the Civil Society, Civil Society itself is comprised of all entities that are not the State, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. Several distinct family entities compose the Civil Society and NGO category.

A family may be comprised of several types of relatives, from close to distant members, however, each family will have some common characteristics:

- A homogenous institutional culture and the existence of established or informal consultation mechanisms will be found within a family group;
- An umbrella organization of international character will cluster a large number of members under the same reference structure;
- Communication mechanisms within a family will allow information dissemination and exchanges between members of the same family group.

Based on these considerations, the family groups involved in the World Summit on the Information Society appear to be the following:

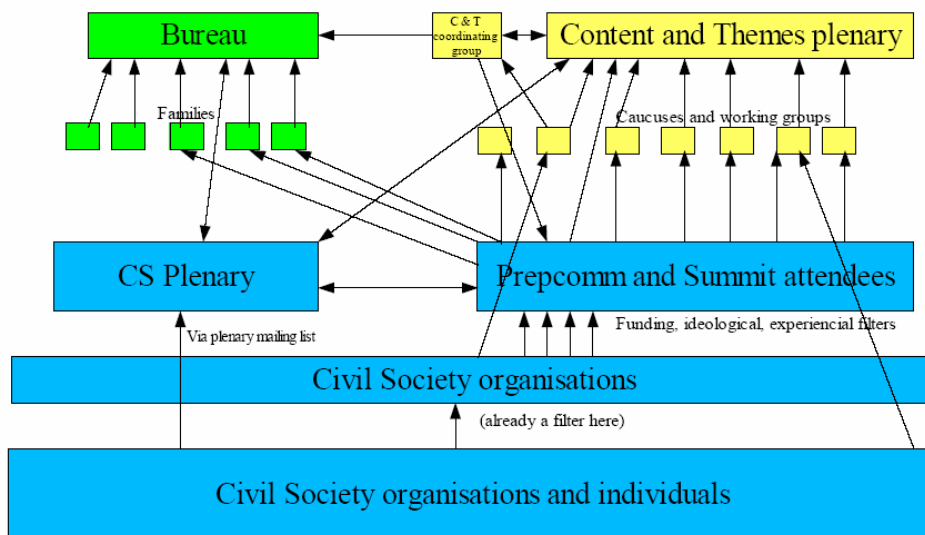
- Academia and education
- The science and technology community
- The media
- The creators and active promoters of culture
- Cities and local authorities
- Trade Unions
- Parliamentarians
- NGOs (entities with legal status)
- Youth
- Gender
- Indigenous People
- Disabled
- Social movements (ad hoc movements without legal status)
- Multi-stakeholders partnerships
- Philanthropic institutions & Foundations
- Think Tanks
- Africa Region
- Latin America Region
- Asian Region

- North America, Europe and CIS Region
  - Middle East and West Asia Region
- (Alegre, A. G., personal communication, March 16, 2004, Report on the Transition Period between phase 1 and 2).

Civil Society was involved in the preparation of the summit on an open and transparent basis, identifying the social and cultural consequences of current trends and in drawing attention to the need to introduce democratic accountability on the strategic options taken at all levels.

Its diversity and, often, hands-on approach to issues, make Civil Society a key player in the renewed international partnership called for by the United Nations Secretary-General:

*“The relationship between the United Nations and Civil Society has changed beyond recognition... Information technology has empowered Civil Society to be the true guardians of democracy and good governance everywhere. Oppressors cannot hide inside their borders any longer. A strong Civil Society, bound together across all borders with the help of modern communications, will not let them. In a sense it has been the new superpower—the people determined to promote better standards of life in larger freedom.” (Kofi Annan as cited in WFUNA, 2003).*



(Nichol, C. (n.d.). Chart of Civil Society Structure. Retrieved March 17, 2004, from [http://www.wsis.ethz.ch/WSIS\\_CS\\_structure.pdf](http://www.wsis.ethz.ch/WSIS_CS_structure.pdf)

Figure 7: Chart of Civil Society Structure

Civil Society participated in a whole series of events parallel to the Summit. The events it has initiated include forums concerning media, indigenous people and handicapped, a conference on science in the Information Society, meetings and workshops of young people and especially women, and a global summit on cities and local authorities in the Information Society.

Aside the official Summit, the biggest event was the ICT for Development Platform (ICT4D Platform) that aimed to enrich the political core segment of the WSIS. The Platform attracted more than 250 organizations from around 80 countries and brought together government agencies, Civil Society groups, private sector companies, donor agencies and inter-governmental organizations. The aim of the platform was to showcase projects and solutions, debate issues related to ICT for development and to trigger future-oriented, innovative partnerships and initiatives.

It was organized conjointly by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and was visited by more than 25.000 delegates and the general public.

The ICT for Development Platform consists of two parts:

- ICT4D Exhibition that presents innovative projects, best practices, solutions and technologies from 200 governments, organizations and businesses from more than 80 countries
- ICT4D Forum consisting of around 40 events like panel discussions, workshops, seminars, devoted to the platform themes with the participation of heads of state, ministers, CEOs, and grassroots practitioners.

The main themes of the Platform were: Innovating for Equitable Access, Enhancing Human Capacity & Empowerment, Strengthening Communications for Development, Promoting Local Content and Knowledge, and Fostering Policy and Implementation, with additional cross-cutting themes like: Multi-Stakeholder Partnership/Networks, Entrepreneurship/Sustainability/Replicability & Upscaling Potential, Innovation, Women/Gender and Youth. (cp. ICT for Development Platform, 2003).



(<http://www.ict-4d.org/Marketplace/en/BasicInformation/>)

**Figure 8: Main Themes of the ICT for Development Platform**

### 4.3.3 Non-Governmental Organizations

The term “Non-Governmental Organization” or NGO, became well-known in 1945 when the United Nations needed to differentiate in its Charter between intergovernmental specialized agencies and those for international private organizations. At the United Nations virtually all private bodies are recognized as NGOs. (cp. Willetts, n.d.).

Relations between the United Nations and NGOs are outlined in Article 71 of the United Nations Charter and in the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1996/31.

The rights and privileges that are described in detail in the resolution enable organizations who qualify to make a contribution to the work programs and goals of the United Nations. (cp. United Nations, DESA, n.d.).

Some 1,600 NGOs have consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. NGOs carrying out information programs on matters of concern to the United Nations are accredited with the United Nations Department of Public Information. All these NGOs have official representatives at United Nations Headquarters.

It is important to realize that by definition, NGOs are voluntary organizations. Their representatives have no special legal privileges or immunities. NGOs do not have any authority over non-members.

In an era of rapid globalization, Non-Governmental Organizations increasingly play a more important role in forming policies that are changing the world today. NGOs influence decisions made by governments and diplomats and provide a voice for causes that would otherwise go unheard.

The diversity of the world’s NGOs and their perspectives is representative to the diversity and complexity of issues in the arena of international relations. (cp. United Nations, DESA, n.d.).

*“People are forming associations, foundations and similar institutions to deliver human services, promote grass-root economic development, prevent environmental degradation, protect civil rights and pursue a thousand other objectives formerly unattended or left by the state. The cope and scale of this phenomenon is immense.” (Maslyukivska, 1999).*

The Stanley Foundation (1999) describes NGOs as *“diverse, heterogeneous, and independent. They tend to focus around particular issues or causes. They vary widely in organizational structure, size, and membership. They are diverse in mission, level of resources, methods of operating, governance, constituencies, effectiveness, and credibility.”*

As Salamon and Anheir point out: nonprofits share at least five characteristics: they:

- are organizations
- are not part of the government
- do not distribute profits to shareholders
- are self-governing
- serve some public purpose (cited in Lowell 2000, 1)

Maslyukivska (1999) states that the terminology of an NGO is very broad and therefore definitions are not consistent. As an example, in the United States NGOs are called “private voluntary organizations”, whereas in Africa the term “voluntary development organizations” is common. Due to this discordance the definition of NGOs are numerous.

The World Bank defines NGOs as *“private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development”*. (World Bank, 1995, p.13).

A more comprehensive definition is provided by Maslyukivska (1999) citing the World Bank:

*“The diversity of NGOs strains any simple definition. They include many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives.*

*They are private agencies in industrial countries that support international development; indigenous groups organized regionally or nationally; and member-groups in villages. NGOs include charitable and religious associations that mobilize private funds for development, distribute food and family planning services and promote community organization. They also include independent cooperatives, community associations, water-user societies, women’s groups and pastoral associations. Citizen Groups that raise awareness and influence policy are also NGOs.”*

She further defines a NGO as a non-profit making, voluntary, service-oriented/development oriented organization, either for the benefit of members (a grassroots organization) or for other members of the population (an agency). It is an organization of private individuals who believe in certain basic social principles and who structure their activities to bring about development to communities that they are servicing. As a social development organization, assisting in the empowerment of people, it is independent of any external control and is not affiliated to political parties. Specific objectives and aims include tasks to bring about desirable change in a given community or area or situation in order to improve the quality of life especially for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized in urban and rural areas.

NGOs range from large international organizations like Greenpeace, to research institutes, churches, professional associations and local lobby groups. The World Bank (1995) categorizes them into two groups:

- I. Operational NGOs: whose primary purpose is the design and implementation of development-related projects, and
- II. Advocacy NGOs: whose primary purpose is to defend or promote a specific cause and who seek to influence the policies and practices governments, media, etc.

Independently of its characteristics NGOs share some specific strengths. Clark (as cited from the World Bank, 1995) lists following:

- strong grassroots links
- field-based development expertise
- the ability to innovate and adapt
- process-oriented approach to development
- participatory methodologies and tools
- long-term commitment and emphasis on sustainability
- cost-effectiveness

The most commonly identified weaknesses include:

- limited financial and management expertise
- limited institutional capacity
- low levels of self-sustainability
- isolation/lack of inter-organizational communication and/or coordination
- small scale interventions
- lack of understanding of the broader social or economic context

NGOs are nowadays essentially important actors before, during, and increasingly after, governmental decision-making sessions. As mentioned by the UN Secretary-General in 1995:

*"Non-governmental organizations are a basic element in the representation of the modern world. And their participation in international organizations is in a way a guarantee of the latter's political legitimacy. On all continents non-governmental organizations are today continually increasing in number. And this development is inseparable from the aspiration to freedom and democracy which today animates international society... From the standpoint of global democratization, we need the participation of international public opinion and the mobilizing powers of non-governmental organizations". (cp. Maslyukivska, 1995).*

Especially the Growth of NGOs in the Third World is enormous. Garilao (as cited in Maslyukivska, 1999) approaches four causes for this growth:

- I. Societal conflict and tension
- II. The need to respond more effectively to crisis situations in the face of breakdown of traditional structures
- III. Ideological and value differences with the powers-that-be in the planning and implementation of development work, and
- IV. The realization that neither government nor the private sector has the will, means or capacity to deal with all immediate and lingering social problems

#### **4.3.4 WSIS Issues**

The United Nations Resolution 56/183 constitutes to develop “*a common vision and understanding of the Information Society*” as the main goal of the World Summit on the Information Society. Thematic areas are manifold, but to summarize, the WSIS is about the set-up of the digital domain and about service and content. The big issues are the “digital divide”, pushed by developing countries in Africa; “free access, copyright, privacy”, proposed by Western countries and avoided by China or Syria. Developed countries are eager to provide ICTs infrastructure globally to open up markets for telecommunications-, e-commerce-, media-, and entertainment services in underdeveloped countries.

It will also be the first time that issues such as the role of communications in promoting development, and the challenges of cybersecurity, spam, infrastructure for R&D, Internet governance and freedom of expression in the information age will be raised for global discussion and action at the highest governmental levels, with the participation of all those who have a stake in the outcome.

Three main topic-clusters can be analyzed:

Vision: What is the shared vision of the Information Society? What framework can the international community develop to ensure that possible benefits of ICTs for development are maximized while the possible obstacles and barriers are minimized?

Access: How can the benefits of ubiquitous and affordable ICTs be extended to all the world’s inhabitants? How can people who already have access to ICTs be assisted to use them effectively?

Applications: The development of ICTs has implications for economic, social and cultural development. How can ICTs be leveraged to help promote the common goals of humanity, such as those expressed in the United Nations Millennium Declaration? (cp. WSIS Executive Secretariat, 2003b).

**Proposed topics by ITU:**

- Establish a common vision for the Information Society
- Utilize Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to overcome poverty and achieve other Millennium Development Goals
- Work towards bridging the digital divide
- Create partnerships and funding mechanisms for universal and affordable access to ICTs
- Consider the need for new legal and policy frameworks for cyberspace
- Create coordination mechanisms for improved security in cyberspace
- Promote cultural and linguistic diversity in the Information Society
- Uphold freedom of expression and the right to communicate (cp. WSIS Executive Secretariat, 2003b).

**Proposed topics by UNESCO:**

Instead of talking of *Information Societies* UNESCO rather promotes the concept of *Knowledge Societies*, arguing that only the enhancement of information flows is not sufficient for the construction of knowledge societies.

UNESCO identifies three main challenges that need to be posed in the construction of knowledge societies:

- I. to narrow the digital divide that accentuates disparities in development, excluding entire groups and countries from the benefits of information and knowledge;
- II. to guarantee the free flow of, and equitable access to, data, information, best practices and knowledge in the Information Society; and
- III. to build international consensus on shared values and principles. (cp. UNESCO, 2003, December).

To face these challenges UNESCO defines four principles that are essential for the development of equitable knowledge societies:

- cultural diversity
- equal access to education
- universal access to information, especially in the public domain
- freedom of expression

Knowledge societies should be based on a strong commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression as defined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and pluralistic and independent media. Knowledge societies should allow the full realization of the right to education and of all cultural rights.

In knowledge societies, access to the public domain of information and knowledge for educational and cultural purposes should be as broad as possible. An important principle of knowledge societies should be encouraging and giving expression to cultural and linguistic diversity. (cp. UNESCO, 2003, March).

### **Proposed topics by Civil Society:**

Communication as a Human Right: Communication here is understood as an interactive and participatory process. This concept clearly distinguishes itself from the mere right to access to information and the model of the info-"oneway street" that delivers content from a few senders to many receivers in a second

Diversity of Opinions, Cultures, and Perspectives: a special emphasis has to be put on the different realities and perspectives of marginalized groups, such as migrants and indigenous populations, and on the preservation of traditional and indigenous knowledge.

Global Information Commons: information and communication resources are part of the "global commons". Securing and enlarging the commons and the public domain are aims that stand in strong contrast to intellectual property claims brought forward by the private sector and some governments.

Open Source and Free Software: the concept of Open Content is using free software as a model for the production of content and shows a practical example for the Information Commons.

Local Initiatives, Local Control: Civil Society models emphasize the central role of local and interest-based communities and want to establish funding for community-based initiatives such as local radio.

Digital Divide: Civil Society groups do not only emphasize the North-South axis of the Digital Divide, but as well barriers for accessing information inside societies – political, social and technical barriers, education, gender.

Gender: the treatment of gender issues is seen as very important challenge for the WSIS. Claims include fighting gender-based discrimination, helping the participation of women in the Information Society and reducing gender hierarchies and stereotypes.

Privacy, Data Protection: Civil Society concepts call for enhancing data protection and saving privacy. However, this aims against all kinds of surveillance by states as well as exploiting and selling consumer data by companies.

Media Ownership and Regulation: some Civil Society actors point at the problem of media ownership concentration and demand the democratization of the media.

Workers' Rights and Working Conditions: Civil Society fights for establishing workers' rights, which is especially important in a dynamic and global market for communication and information services and goods.

Communication and Knowledge Society: Civil Society groups identify a multitude of different societies and therefore speak of a communication society or a knowledge society. (cp. Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2003a) and (cp. Civil Society CT Group, 2003).

### **High Level Round Tables**

The WSIS Secretariat organized round tables exclusively to 15 Heads of State or Government and 15 leaders from intergovernmental organizations, Civil Society (including NGOs) and business sector entities (including ITU sector members).

The sessions were not public and not even for the WSIS registered participants. The overarching theme was: "An Information Society for All: Opportunities and Challenges". The round tables were held in parallel with the plenary meetings as follows:

#### Creating Digital Opportunities, 10 December, 2003:

Speakers welcomed the interactive exchange of views and the ideas put forward for creating digital opportunities. They recognized the need for new forms of solidarity, partnership and cooperation among all stakeholders, including governments, private sector, Civil Society and international organizations to build an inclusive Information Society. Bridging the digital divide required strong commitments by all stakeholders. The main focus of the discussion centered on the questions of access to ICTs, partnerships and funding.

#### Diversity in Cyberspace, 11 December, 2003:

Participants addressed, in an interactive exchange, the challenge of reconciling the flow of information and the need to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity in a digital world. The session focused, in particular, on the following issues: cultural and linguistic diversity; freedom of expression and media ownership; and law and ethics on the Internet.

#### ICT as a Tool to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals, 11 December, 2003:

The main focus of the discussion centered on the questions of capacity-building, the role of ICT in helping to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development and ways in which ICTs can enable innovative delivery of social services including the areas of health and education. During the debate, which reflected strong commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, ICTs were firmly placed at the centre of development.

It was broadly recognized that ICTs could contribute to accelerating the achievement of the international development targets by enhancing education, labor productivity and job opportunities, such as through call centers, and by creating local content. ICTs could also be effective tools to combat disease, promote universal respect of human rights, democracy and fundamental freedoms. (WSIS Executive Secretariat, 2003e).

#### 4.3.5 Outcome and Consequences

The World Summit on the Information Society can be evaluated from two perspectives: first, as a political conference and policy forum, and secondly, as a showcase for Civil Society activities, an opportunity for networking and an educational exhibition.

##### **WSIS as a forum of policy:**

The ITU announced before the Summit that more than fifty heads of state and prime ministers were to attend the WSIS.

Actually there were only a few heads of state and most of the ministerial delegates were mainly ministers from a lower level, often the ones for technology – generally without own budgets and relatively weak power in their respective governments. Due to this fact it was very difficult for summit attendees to agree over financing matters, such as the Digital Solidarity Fund, that has been put on hold until the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis 2005.

The World Summit on the Information Society's expected outcome was supposed to result in an Action Plan and a Declaration. During the Summit major differences between governments and Civil Society occurred while drafting the official papers, which ended in a Governmental Declaration and the Civil Society Declaration "Shaping Information Societies for Human Need". In short: the official declaration says what could be done, while the Civil Society declaration says what should be done. In other words, the two declarations set the distance between today's realities and tomorrow's expectations. The final documents are written in a rather general and vague style. The aim of the governments was to develop a common vision that all countries could accept, with such broad differences like China in human rights questions and the United States of America in security and privacy issues. Most parts of the declaration are written in a style to find the lowest common denominator which is possible among States that keep reaffirming their sovereign authority (Declaration of Principles, n. 6).

In controversial topics, like in the freedom of the press-issue, governments referred to the need to "respect national legislations". James Ottaway outlines this conflict at his opening statement of the 2003 IPI Congress:

*Bluntly put, the WSIS is an ITU power play for ideological influence and international regulatory power within the UN system, where the major issues of content on the Internet, regulation of the Internet, economic and social development addressing ignorance, poverty and the 'digital divide' should be debated in more appropriate UN forums at UNESCO in Paris or the UN Information Committee in New York. But even if the WSIS were sponsored by UNESCO or the UN Information Committee, anyone interested in their own press freedoms, and the free flow of news and information for every citizen of the world, must be very worried and skeptical when 185 United Nations gather to talk about 'The Information Society'.*

*That is because of the fundamental fact that a clear majority of nations (nearly 60 per cent in the latest Freedom House report on the status of press freedom worldwide) do not allow a free press. (Ottaway, 2003, p. 25).*

#### **WSIS as a multi-stakeholder summit:**

Global Civil Society is struggling for ways to be heard and recognized within the global political arena. A reason for this might be that the concept of Civil Society is rather vague. Too many different people, interests and issues lie behind the term and can hardly find one voice to successfully play in the global political arena.

Moreover, Civil Society should be seen as something more than progressive activists like the ones demonstrating and sometimes violently oppose United Nations summits. Regarding media, Civil Society should be more aware of the role and position within global media networks – how they are seen and how the public and politicians perceive the concept of Civil Society.

The World Summit on the Information Society showed a high level of Civil Society involvement. In the history of United Nations summits it was the first one with this multi-stakeholder approach, where non-governmental actors like the private sector and Civil Society were directly involved into the political process. Even though there have been controversies with the participation of Civil Society in negotiation groups at the preparatory conferences. Some governments wanted to keep Civil Society (in the traditional United Nations mechanisms “observers” with only limited speaking rights and written contributions) out of conference rooms. Due to the many preparatory meetings the multi-stakeholder approach became routine and non-governmental stakeholders gained voice and brought important input and transparency to the process.

The most effective Civil Society groups in Phase I were the caucuses of women, youth and human rights, who had participated in previous United Nations processes and understood the importance of building relationships directly with national government delegations and who provided timely and concise draft text which could be incorporated by the governments in the negotiations.

For the first time governments recognized that both non-governmental stakeholders, private sector and Civil Society, play an important role in the Information Age. In this context Kleinwächter talks about a “new trilateralism”: governments, private industry and Civil Society have identical as well as conflicting interests and hold different roles, responsibilities and legal status. None one of them can represent the whole society with all varying interests if the drafting of global regulatory frameworks and the building of new global governance structures should be successful. Only if all three parties are involved and inter-linked in the drafting and decision making process, it will be possible to reach globally workable solutions.

It is not yet clear how these “triangular mechanisms” will be designed and resourced in detail. WSIS was only the beginning of a journey into the unknown territory of cyberspace. (cp. Kleinwächter, 2002).

In a less positive view Civil Society is only involved in the WSIS because governments need legitimacy in finding an alternative to the 'global governance' model that sees every meeting of high level government officials behind high fences, with thousands of riot police gassing and beating tens or hundreds of thousands of citizens in the streets below, opposing the current version of globalization and proposing alternatives. By including Civil Society situations like this could be avoided and decisions would seem legitimate.

The outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society might be controversial. However, the lasting impact of the WSIS is likely to be more subtle and varied than any of the official documents suggest.

Simply by bringing so many stakeholders to the same place, interactions between researchers, delegates, Civil Society members and corporate people helped stimulate partnerships to bring ICTs to a more prominent place on the world stage. Even though this type of international cooperation is not reflected in official papers it surely helps to justify the Summit's central goal: to get the Internet, telephones and other communications to at least half the world's inhabitants by 2015.

In Phase II of the World Summit on the Information Society 2005 in Tunis, divergent strategies among three groups can be found:

- Those who feel that their issues were adequately covered in the Geneva-Phase documents and want to focus on project implementation (e.g. youth, women);
- Those whose issues were not conclusively dealt with and were held over to Phase II for resolution (e.g. internet governance, freedom of expression, financing); and
- Those who missed the Phase I process and are trying to figure out how to introduce the missing issues into the process (e.g. disabilities).

Tunis is going to be a challenge therefore as most governments will not want to re-open negotiations on the declaration and action plan. They would like to see the Tunisia Summit as a monitoring point. However, lots of issues are still open and the next months will be exciting for both governments and Civil Society to achieve their goals.

#### **4.4 Summary**

The World Summit on the Information Society struck a new path in assembling a summit for the United Nations – not only in an organizational point of view with the acknowledgement of participation of Civil Society – but also for tackling an issue in a forward-thinking way. That is what made the WSIS rather special. There was not the simple attempt to respond to a pressing problem.

It was not about fighting against HIV/AIDS, or finding a solution to the global climate change. Normally, summits deal with existing problems, but the WSIS was dealing with existing opportunities.

The official task of the WSIS was to develop a new and common vision of the society citizens worldwide want to live in. It was indeed an opportunity to be proactive, and to undertake the challenge of setting up an appropriate mechanism to sustain this visionary approach. In terms of possibilities, the WSIS covers all dimensions of society, not just sectors such as agriculture, health, habitat, etc. The Summit was concerned with all aspects of life which are undergoing permanent and profound changes due to the influence of ICTs.

United Nations summits generally attract a lot of international media. In case of the WSIS media coverage was rather poor, compared to other United Nations summits like in Rio de Janeiro (1992 Earth Summit – Conference on Environment and Development) or Johannesburg (2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development).

It could be seen that the WSIS was – at least theoretically – a summit of consensus. Obvious goals were defined by all stakeholders and due to the integration of Civil Society there was only a small amount of people demonstrating in front of the summit venue, who felt that their interests were not represented in the plenary discussions. A process aimed at *“building a common vision of the Information Society”* as stated in the Declaration of Principles (n. 11) is hardly of interest for media. Consensus is not newsworthy and by analyzing media coverage of the WSIS most topics were about the disagreements between Civil Society and governments. Media generally cover stories of dissent and these provoke fear and a feeling of insecurity in the world. Even though the WSIS aimed at the opposite, it did not help the general public to get a more positive feeling about ICTs. Wolfgang Schüssel, Federal Chancellor of Austria, argued in his opening speech at the 2003 World Congress of the International Press Institute, (IPI): *“On the surface, it may seem that information and insecurity are contradictory, that information is a cure for insecurity. Actually, I have the impression that we are living in a media world where things are turned upside down, where information can be the cause for insecurity.”* (Schüssel, 2003, p. 11).

Independently of role media at the WSIS, the issue of “Information Society” should be one of very little controversial issues in contemporary international relations. However, the WSIS was a summit with “a seemingly unspoken global consensus in favor of the use and utility of the Internet frayed at the level of formal relations.” (Selian/Cuckier, 2003). Areas of conflict between the summit’s stakeholders were over human rights, free press, intellectual property, the digital divide and control of the Internet infrastructure.

Due to this lack of consensus between governments and Civil Society, each party drafted their own declaration. Civil Society organizations, with a wide diversity of backgrounds and expertise, have been working inside the Summit process to shape a people-centered, inclusive and equitable concept of information and communication societies.

The drafting of the Civil Society declaration “Shaping Information Societies for Human Needs” was composed from various inputs of following preparatory conferences:

- Civil Society Essential Benchmarks for WSIS
- Declaration of Cities and Local Authorities (Lyon Declaration)
- Bilbao Declaration
- Nouakchott Declaration - Plan of Action
- Curitiba Declaration - Plan of Action
- Shanghai Declaration
- Declaration of Indigenous People
- Declaration of People with Disabilities
- Declaration of Volunteers (Dakar Declaration) - Plan of Action
- Declaration of Youth

This declaration represents the culmination of two years of worldwide consultation among Civil Society. At the heart of our vision of information and communication societies is the human being. While technologies are fundamental means of development, they must not become ends in themselves.

The declaration explores human rights, development and social justice under the new conditions of information and communication technology, and addresses the danger of widening social gaps, inequalities and threats to existing freedoms. (cp. Kuhlen, 2003).

The differences between the Civil Society Declaration and the official Declaration of Principles by the WSIS Plenary are not immediately discernible, yet the major differences lie in the classic issues of contention. The biggest concern comprises the human rights issue. Whereas the governments hesitated to reaffirm long agreed issues upon human rights standards in their Declaration, the Civil Society Declaration develops ideas and strategies on how to realize, fulfill and bring forward the development and human rights of all people from a social justice focus. The official Declaration makes a reference on Article 19 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but not clearly to the extent that Civil Society places the human being at the heart of the Information Society. Furthermore the WSIS declaration recognizes the *Right to Communicate*, a term from the 1970 and 80s, which was thoroughly exposed and discredited in the debate of the *New World Communication World Order (NWICO)*. Civil Society explicitly endorses the right to freedom of opinion and expression – including freedom of the press, irrespective of national borders. (cp. Selian/Cuckier, 2003).

## 5. Case Study: The Youth Caucus at WSIS, facilitated by TakingITGlobal

The case study presented in this chapter serves as the methodological part of the thesis. TakingITGlobal, the international youth organization and facilitator of the WSIS Youth Caucus, has been chosen as an excellent example how to bear one's interest in a United Nations summit, exemplified at the World Summit on the Information Society. The Youth Caucus started its operations at the same time the first Preparatory Conference was held in Geneva and provided valuable input throughout the preparatory process. Youth Caucus can be presented as the most successful family member of the WSIS Civil Society. It was the only affiliate that lobbied an own paragraph into the official Declaration of Principles. Paragraph 11 of the Declaration reads as follows:

*We are committed to realizing our common vision of the Information Society for ourselves and for future generations. We recognize that young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. We must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs. We are also committed to ensuring that the development of ICT applications and operation of services respects the rights of children as well as their protection and well-being. (WSIS, 2003, December 13).*

This paragraph is the result of a long and enduring effort of the Youth Caucus to lobby youth-related interests into official documents. Success was achieved through excellent preparation and knowledge of the structure and proceedings at United Nations Summits. Since Civil Society is accepted in the plenary but does not have a voice, governmental delegates are needed to speak at plenary. The Youth Caucus executed heavy lobbying to achieve its goal.

The first sentence was written by the Youth Caucus and read by Australia, Canada and Romania at the second preparatory meeting in February 2003. The second sentence was written by the Youth Caucus in collaboration with Fiji, who presented it at the intersessional meeting in July. At PrepCom 3 the specific language made its way fully into the Declaration. Overall, the text was endorsed and pushed forward at this last Prepcom by numerous governments, including Canada, Fiji, Australia, Italy (on behalf of the European Union) and others. It was one of the first parts of the Declaration to be 'agreed' by governments.

The text acknowledges the central and leading role of young people in the Information Society. It recognizes the diverse roles youth can play not just as passive "learners" but as active developers, contributors and entrepreneurs.

It goes beyond the concept that youth need to be involved in decision-making, to note that in reality young people are already acting as decision-makers in many aspects of this new society. It uses strong language such as “must” (rather than “can”, for example) to call on governments to empower youth further in their multiple roles.

The paragraph incorporates language which recognizes that young people have diverse experiences of the Information Society, and that while many are “leading creators and earliest adopters” others have not yet been able to access or “fully benefit” from ICTs. (Moraitis, 2003b).

High commitment, diligent preparation and on time interventions due to fruitful lobbying were the main reasons for the accomplishment of the Youth Caucus.

## **5.1 TakingITGlobal.org**

TakingITGlobal (TIG) is an international youth-led and focused organization, headquartered in Toronto. TIG has a mission and methodology at the intersection of three major global trends – the international scope of major issues, the information and communications technology revolution and the demographic force of young people. By now the organization has more than 28,000 members, who are often leaders in their communities, in over 220 countries, and above 25 million web site hits per month. Together with news, discussions, databases of events, organizations and opportunities, the site includes the biggest and most diverse gallery of youth-created artwork, online country portals for youth for nearly every country in the world, and thematic networks around major global challenges (e.g. environment) developed with partners. TakingITGlobal has established co-branding relationships with more than 1,000 youth organizations, from human-rights groups to performing-arts advocates. In addition to being a resource guide, TIG is also a dynamic environment where teens can take part in virtual discussions, mentoring programs and workshops.

TakingITGlobal is partly a response to the fact that the development of a global and holistic youth network has been a key recommendation in the Agenda 21, from the United Nations World Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), that was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992:

*“Governments, according to their strategies, should take measures to give support to programmes, projects, networks, national organizations and youth non-governmental organizations to examine the integration of programmes in relation to their project requirements, encouraging the involvement of youth in project identification, design, implementation and follow-up.” (UNCED, 1992, para 28.9g).*

In its official vision TakingITGlobal wants to provide young people with:

- Inspiration to make a difference
- Information to realize their potential
- Involvement where their voice counts
- Action opportunities to translate their ideas into reality
- Connection to a worldwide community - to take it global  
(www.takingitglobal.org, About Us, Vision)



(TakingITGlobal Homepage, Retrieved March 25, 2004, from <http://www.takingitglobal.org>)

Figure 9: TakingITGlobal Homepage

The organization has very ambitious goals for the year 2010:

- To realize the potential of at least 5 million young people as leaders for the benefit of their local and global communities.
- To bridge the 'continuity gap' - enhancing the effectiveness of youth action by connecting all major youth activities, events, programs and initiatives in a global network.
- To mainstream recognition that young people are key stakeholders in all national and international policy making.

- To produce world's most comprehensive and powerful knowledge resource - pushing the boundaries of online community and technology as a tool for social empowerment.
- To instigate significant evolution in the present concepts of school-education by increasing global connection, meaningful use of ICTs (information and communication technologies) and inspiring student engagement.
- To demonstrate innovation, excellence, creativity and professionalism in the management of a new style of international organization that is entrepreneurial, technology-enhanced, and youth-driven. ([www.takingitglobal.org](http://www.takingitglobal.org), About Us, Vision).

As a non-profit organization, TakingITGlobal is dependent on diverse donators. Therefore it has established a sustainability model which is based on continued support from four main revenue sources:

Corporate: historically, a significant portion of TakingITGlobal's funding came from the corporate sector. Donors have included Hewlett Packard Canada, the RBC Financial Group, McDonalds, Microsoft, Magna International, 3com, and others.

Philanthropic: TakingITGlobal has received funds from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the New York-based Lifebridge Foundation.

Canadian organizations and government agencies: YMCA of Greater Toronto, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, UNICEF, and UNDP.

Technology Platform: almost half of TakingITGlobal's historical revenue has come from web development, where TakingITGlobal has licensed its technology platform. Most of these projects are for partners in the youth-development/engagement space.

TakingITGlobal maintains an active group of advisors who provide assistance with strategic planning, fundraising, and program development, through formal meetings and more informal communication. Relationships include national and international leaders as: Ellen Ratchye-Foster (Chief Context Officer at New York based advertising agency Fallon Worldwide), and Ron Mitchell (Vice President of Integrated Marketing Communications for Fujitsu Consulting). TakingITGlobal also benefits from pro-bono relationships with Skadden Arps (world's largest global law firm), and Ruder Finn (Public Relations). To ensure financial sustainability TakingITGlobal pays strong attention to strengthen the strong network through innovative partnerships and new meaningful content, especially from traditional international development donors such as governments and the philanthropic sector. TakingITGlobal also benefits from the resale of technology and other services to support its efforts. However, TakingITGlobal's activities have tended to be built more on our enthusiasm, innovation and deep commitment, rather than financial resources. (cp. Moraitis, 2003a).

### **5.1.1 History of TakingITGlobal**

TakingITGlobal was founded in 2000 by Jennifer Corriero and Michael Furdyk, two young Canadians from Toronto, who left high-profile consulting jobs with Microsoft Corporation. For six months, they had been advising senior executives the next generation of knowledge workers, the “Net generation”. When they weren’t needed at headquarters, they traveled to conferences such as the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Global Knowledge in Malaysia and Expanding Learning Horizons in Australia, to raise awareness of and gain insights for TakingITGlobal.

In 2001 Youth from Cyprus, Ghana, and India contributed their ideas and involved other youth in pilot projects. TakingITGlobal integrated Nation1, a similar youth-run initiative incubated by the MIT Media Lab, and also formed a strong strategic partnership with the New York-based Global Youth Action Network, a coalition of national-level youth organizations in over 150 countries. These partnerships strengthened TakingITGlobal’s capacity to reach youth leaders worldwide. The website had quadrupled in size in 2002, TIG focused on special projects (networking, policy, capacity building) around the digital divide, youth employment and sustainable development, forming strategic partnerships with groups including the Global Knowledge Partnership, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and the Youth Employment Summit, as well as five UN agencies (UNEP, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO and the ITU) and approximately 100 youth organizations. TakingITGlobal technology was central to youth organizing around two major global events – the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (for which it created the official site of the Youth Caucus), and the Youth Employment Summit. In 2003 the official launch of Youth Creating Digital Opportunities, a coalition to engage youth in bridging the digital divide, was founded. While volunteers remained central to its work, TIG’s young staff has also grown to more than 14 people, managing a budget of \$1.9 million Canadian Dollars. (cp. Moraitis, 2003a).

### **5.1.2 Youth Driven as the Main Factor for Success**

TakingITGlobal is conceived, led, and run by young people, aged 14 to 29 with an average age of 22. This youth-lead approach offers certain advantages: being young people a strong affinity with participants helps to understand their needs, hopes and dreams, delivering an experience that addresses the real concerns of young people. There is also a strong integrity with the audience that fosters a stronger sense of community - young people become driven by passion and commitment rather than marketing. Another feature is the presentation of opportunities for young people to engage with and learn from TakingITGlobal at every level, from participant to representative or staff member.

TakingITGlobal provides a service that reflects and empowers young people’s holistic participation in society, rather than exclusively addressing a specific issue, or domain of action.

Instead of providing information about “community service” or “Greenpeace”, the organization offers wide ranging interests and activities around theme-specific networks, events and organizations to advance substantive debates and actions. TIG is a different type of international organization with the central component being a global online community. Main focus is given to provide space that allows people with different backgrounds and cultures to come together. It is built upon an online network that is inherently global with the potential to reach and implement projects on an international scale and share information about activities.

With an ongoing effort TakingITGlobal wants to bridge the “Continuity Gap”. It believes that continuity is of utmost importance for youth. Increasingly, some of the best learning and development initiatives are happening outside the classroom. The problem, however, is that most of these are one-time experiences. For reasons of practicality or funding, donors and organizers think “project” oriented and time-limited. They run their conference, camp, project, workshop, or other initiative but think little about “follow-up”. What happens next is beyond their mandate. Young people often go away inspired, but don’t have a pathway to continue their action and involvement. (cp. TakingITGlobal, 2003).

### **5.1.3 Thematic Engagement Around Major Global Challenges**

The three key words *inspiration*, *information*, and *involvement* (which serve as the slogan for the organization) should challenge youth to effective participation. TakingITGlobal sees youth often as being uninspired. They lack information about the issues and a personal connection or imperative for action. Even once inspired, youth require a pathway to action, which is provided by TIG in form of comprehensive and easy to navigate information on opportunities to get involved in, models to replicate, events to participate in, funds to access, or networks to join. TIG wants to support both national and international youth-led initiatives with sophisticated knowledge and network management technology tools.

A main goal is to teach following the critical skills to youth worldwide:

- Cultural Sensitivity & Global Awareness
- Teamwork & Collaboration
- Creativity & Innovation, and
- Communication & Conflict Resolution

TakingITGlobal developed a series of thematic strategies around important global challenges. Topics of priority include the digital divide, youth employment, sustainable development, health, and peace, as well as activities which youth are prominently involved in such as youth-created media, youth exchange and travel, and projects around the United Nations.

Strategies incorporate some or all of the following goals and action: Networking – connecting young people working in an area to learn from each others projects and share experiences, as well as providing sources of information about opportunities, events, organizations, projects, and news in the area – in other words, a comprehensive knowledge resource. Policy advocacy – facilitating youth involvement in (mostly global) policy processes and dialogues, including laying the groundwork (making the case for youth involvement and building and connecting a movement of youth around the issue), providing secretariat support for youth participation (helping with logistics, research or preparation of background information), and liaison with global institutions.

Celebration and recognition – highlighting the role of young people involved in an issue area to build awareness of the issue itself and demonstrate best-practice success stories that may inspire others through online project profiles, publications, award programs, and the media. Concrete projects – building the capacity of young people leading development initiatives, firstly by directly providing mentorship and grants and secondly by helping major global institutions understand the opportunities and needs of youth working in the area to catalyze mainstream support and engagement. (cp. Moraitis, 2003a).

## **5.2 The WSIS Youth Caucus as a Best Practice Model**

The Youth Caucus was established as an instrument to raise youth's voice in the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society. If there ever was an area where young people were leaders not only of the future, but also of today, it clearly is the emerging Information Society. From web development to information access, young people are growing up with the latest technologies, providing innovative solutions to global challenges. Clearly, if youth wants real change, it must involve in policy- and decision-making. Yet while young people have often been recognized as stakeholders in United Nations conferences, rarely has their voice actually been heard or their participation been effective. The World Summit on the Information Society Youth Caucus wanted to build upon the success and lessons learnt from previous youth involvement in policy processes. Examples for involvement were the Rio Earth Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, or the Special Session on Children to Habitat. The term "caucus" derived from politics in the USA, meaning a group of people who come together to devise a common political strategy.

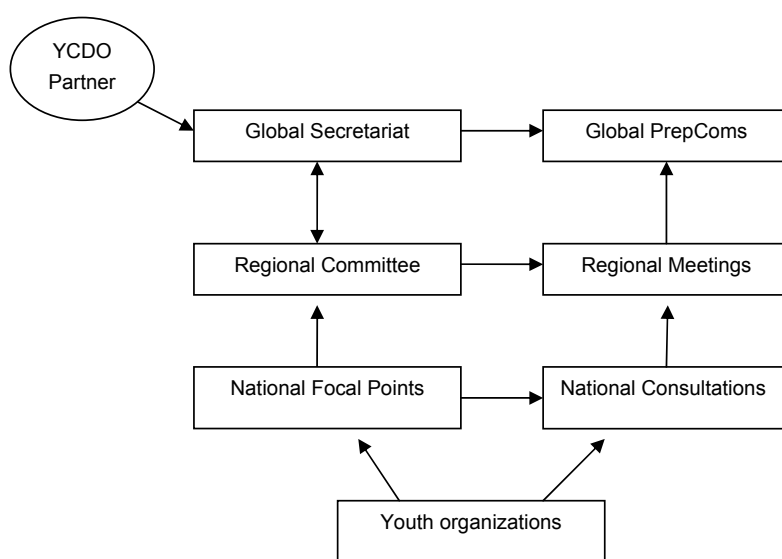
The Youth Caucus was formed at the First Preparatory Committee meeting held in Geneva, July 1-5, 2002. At this first preparatory meeting, the Youth Caucus met daily to coordinate activities, prepare positions on procedures as well as on WSIS-related content. Youth Caucus participated in all sub-committees established by Civil Society, and participated in the governmental process speaking in plenary as observers and had two youth representatives on official government delegations. Communications activities included a daily newsletter, participation in the Civil Society press conference, and a number of media opportunities.

The key issues raised by the Youth Caucus include:

- basic conditions such as education and health are pre-requisites for an Information Society
- transparency, democracy, equality, and human rights are key values of an Information Society
- everyone should be able to access and participate in the Information Society, using the most appropriate technologies available
- all facets of the Information Society must be explored, including society, culture, politics, economics and the environment. (cp. Moraitis, 2003d).

### 5.2.1 Working Structure of the Youth Caucus

There are many activities to coordinate in such a large global process. The Youth Caucus put strong effort into coordination of activities and gaining legitimacy through broad outreach and a professional approach.



(Moraitis, N. (2003d). World Summit on the Information Society – Youth Caucus. Strategic Plan. Draft v.1. Unpublished manuscript.)

Figure 10: Structure of the WSIS Youth Caucus

On a global level: TakingITGlobal acted as the Global Secretariat for the WSIS Youth Caucus. The Youth Secretariat coordinated and implemented activities between and during the Preparatory Committees. These included mobilization of young people to participate in the process, preparation of information to assist their involvement and liaison with the Executive Secretariat of the WSIS to ensure meaningful opportunities for input. The Secretariat worked together with other partners and received support within the framework of the Youth Creating Digital Opportunity program.

On a regional level: Youth input was also placed within WSIS on regional-level preparatory processes. Regional Groups of the Caucus were active at the European Regional Meeting in Bucharest, Romania (November 2002), the Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting in Tokyo, Japan and the South American Regional Meeting in the Dominican Republic (both January 2003). Given that the African Regional Meeting was held prior to the creation of the WSIS Youth Caucus at PrepCom 1, TakingITGlobal was unable to affect that meeting in a coordinated manner. However, the input of African youth was facilitated throughout the rest of the WSIS process. Regional youth bodies such as student associations and regional youth councils coordinated activities related to the WSIS in their area.

Each region created a committee, made up of representatives of different groups, to help guide youth groups participating in the process, collate their input, and act as a liaison with the host country organizers of the Regional Meetings. Each region aimed to identify their top priority areas of concern well in advance, and these were forwarded to the host country organizers for consideration and inclusion within the Regional Declarations.

On a national level: National level procedures also were an integral part of the WSIS process. Key objectives of youth participation at a national level included the inclusion of a broader group of young people in consultation about their priority issues and opinions on the Information Society in order to raise more awareness and visibility on locally-relevant policy positions. Another focus was on youth participation on the national political landscape, ensuring that governments are aware of youth concerns and take these to the regional and global preparatory process to strengthen the position for the Youth Caucus.

National level processes were split into two forms: official government preparations involving a broad range of stakeholder groups, and youth-specific consultations organized by young people themselves. "National Focal Points" were established which facilitated effective communication and coordinated projects among other national youth-led organizations. Their main tasks were to organize consultations, liaise with government ministries and raise local sponsorship for youth activities in the process.

## **5.2.2 Lobbying Activities of the Youth Caucus**

Two documents formed the basis of youth input to the WSIS process. The first, "Youth Principles and Priorities", explained issues the Youth Caucus believed to be important for consideration during the WSIS. The document was a digestion of many previous youth texts and documents developed at previous youth meetings such as the International Youth Parliament, the World Youth Forum and the UNESCO Youth Forum. The second document was a "Youth Text", that explained what young people would write if they were in charge of producing the actual outcome documents of the World Summit.

During the Summit the Youth Caucus created comments on different draft language for both the official Declaration and the Action Plan. The success of the Youth Caucus is built on a cascade of lobbying measures. It is not so much about the way each single activity was successful but the combination of all that led to the Youth Paragraph (cp. Moraitis, 2003d):

### **Organization of Youth participation within the Summit, preparatory committee meetings and regional meetings**

Formatiert: Nummerierung und Aufzählungszeichen

Young people were present at every part of the WSIS process, as well as within government, Civil Society and business delegations. They were well informed, held regular meetings to coordinate activities, had opportunities to speak and present their views via communications activities and organized their own events.

Youth Sourcebooks: Prior to each PrepCom and Regional Meeting a youth sourcebook was created. The sourcebooks served as one-stop resources for young people participating in the meeting and included information such as:

- Background on the WSIS process, including copies of reports on youth involvement in each of the previous preparatory meetings.
- Copies of the two key documents – “Youth Principles and Priorities” and the “Youth Alternate Text”.
- An annotated copy of the agenda of the meeting, explaining the UN procedures, and outlining at each agenda point some of the key positions and actions young people might take to ensure they are able to make an effective contribution.
- A listing of young people known to be participating in the meeting, including a short biography and contact information.
- An agenda for meetings of the Youth Caucus.
- Logistical information including travel and other arrangements – this will be especially relevant for any delegates sponsored to take part in the meeting.
- Drafts or suggested key points for major presentations or speeches that might be delivered on behalf of Youth Caucus. These will of course be discussed and amended at the actual events before delivery.

Daily meetings: meetings were held daily, generally at 9am as sessions usually began at 10am. The meetings included a briefing on the status of official negotiations and a summary of youth activities the previous day, as well as the agenda for youth-specific activities that day. Sometimes a second meeting was held in the afternoon, especially if negotiations continued into the night. Detailed minutes of each meeting were kept and distributed to participants the same day, as well as posted online.

Formatiert: Nummerierung und Aufzählungszeichen

Speaking: there was the opportunity to speak at plenary in the WSIS Multi-Stakeholder-Event. The speech reflected the spirit of the positions developed by the Youth Caucus and was a tremendous success. Young participants also organized own workshops where youth-related topics were discussed.

Working with other non-governmental organizations: participation in the “Civil Society” process was via the Civil Society Plenary and its associated committees, such as the Content and Themes committee. Youth Caucus had youth NGO representatives within each of these committees to feed the youth perspective into the Civil Society process.

Working with business: the Youth Caucus engaged young ICT entrepreneurs in the businesses community’s input to the Summit and worked together with the Youth Employment Summit’s Country Networks, the International Chamber of Commerce’s Committee of Business Interlocutors and the World Economic Forum’s Global Leaders of Tomorrow community.

Working with governments: despite the fact that the WSIS was supposed to be a true multi-stakeholder process with involvement of all groups on an equal footing, governments remained clearly the most important group. Therefore, the Youth Caucus actively worked with and within the intergovernmental process. Three young people participated in government delegations from Canada, Finland and the Philippines. While these youth delegates made a critical contribution acting as a liaison between the Caucus and their governments and advocating for youth interests, it is a pity that not more governments included young people in their delegations. However, many governments did actively engage with members of the Youth Caucus from their countries and beyond – including the Italians, Dutch, Russians, Austrians, Brazilians, Nigerians, and Australians.

Support for youth delegates and logistics: participating in events does not come cheaply. Therefore some youth delegates from third world countries were funded to cover flight and accommodation. TakingITGlobal supported 10 youth delegates to attend the Summit. Other donors included the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, regional banks, United Nations agencies, as well as private and corporate foundations.

Connecting the WSIS with other events: the WSIS preparatory process and Summit was connected with other key events on the youth and Information Society agenda. This ensured that youth concerns were reiterated and sustained. Such events have included the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Asia Telecom 2002, the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2003, the UN ICT Taskforce, and the World Telecom 2003. (cp. GYAN, n.d.).

### **Communications activities of the Youth Caucus**

Mailing Lists: Electronic mailing lists were used to manage ongoing communication between members of the youth caucus. Lists included a general mailing list (“wsisyouth”) and region specific lists (such as “wsisyoutheupe”).

Newsletter: the Youth Caucus published a newsletter, “Youth@WSIS”, aimed at everyone, including Civil Society, business, the media and young people themselves, but particularly targeted government delegates.

Public and Media Liaison: the youth caucus released press statements and held press conferences which focused on press coverage of national and regional consultations and profiles of youth participation in young people’s local media outlets.

Website: the portal (hosted by TakingITGlobal) featured full information on the Youth Caucus, including how youth can get involved in the different WSIS activities, profiles of young people active in the Information Society, online discussions on the key issues, all key documents, and reports on progress.

### **Youth Caucus Presence at the Geneva Summit**

Communications: the Youth Caucus prepared daily press releases and held two press conferences with background on youth involvement in the Information Society, profiles of young participants and their ICT projects. In addition the newsletter was printed in large quantities and distributed throughout the conference venue and directly to government delegations.

Youth Hub: a large youth stand was established in the ICD4D Platform, as both a working space for young people and a showcase of youth activities in the Information Society. The Youth Hub Space was a gathering place, showcase, information center, cultural display, art exhibition, and presentation area. It encompassed 70 square meters of the Summit’s exhibition space.

Book launch: The Summit served as the launch of a book produced by young people about the Information Society. To be developed in cooperation with UNESCO, and spearheaded by YOIS (Youth for Intergenerational Justice and Sustainability) with collaboration from TakingITGlobal, the book highlights the roles and perspectives of young people active in the Information Society worldwide. It also discussed the full range of issues the Youth Caucus is advocating at the WSIS.

Youth Reception: a reception was held by the young people to celebrate the World Summit on the Information Society – government and business delegates as well as other Civil Society members were invited to attend. (cp. Moraitis 2003c & d).

## 5.3 NGO Roadmap

This strategic plan provides a road-map for action for non-governmental organizations and especially for youth organizations who want to engage actively into United Nations policy processes or likewise decision processes. Not only does it show a way of consistency with actions, but it should also help to explain how the process will work.

Following mechanisms and thoughts are a digest of my personal experiences during my work with TakingITGlobal, and theoretic as well as practical concepts from the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) and the WSIS Youth Caucus (available at <http://ycdo.takingitglobal.org/wsisis>). This roadmap outlines the key components of a successful engagement into a United Nations Summit step-by-step, in this case specifically for the second Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis 2005. It is not a completely comprehensive guide to policy lobbying – instead it is written with the assumption that a non-governmental organization of any country and origin wants to join the global Civil Society-community and to engage as a member of one specific WSIS Civil Society Family. This guide will focus on the planning and the strategic design of successful involvement, providing some useful answers for concerned non-governmental organizations that have the interest and initiative to becoming proactive in policy making, rather than accepting what is decided in anonymous plenary halls. The intended primary target audience are people that are using ICTs in their work, but who have not yet enough expertise and a record of knowledge for involvement in international level policy processes. Even though this roadmap focuses on the second Phase of the WSIS, it can be also used as a general source of information of Civil Society engagement in further United Nations Summits.

### 5.3.1 Getting Started

#### Establishment of a Group

One of the first and most important steps is to put together a team of a few individuals, preferably representing a variety of interested organizations, to form a small planning group. Forming a team is not only important to help achieve the significant amount of work that is required for an effective campaign, but also gives greater legitimacy in reinforcing the credibility and commitment of the campaign.

There are at least three types of people to include in such a team:

- I. people with expertise in chosen issues who can provide key elements to the discussion and prepare background briefings
- II. people who have access to politicians, media workers, official representatives, and community leaders
- III. people who are part of existing regional or thematic caucuses

## **Goals and Strategy Development**

At the first meeting, the main task is to develop a plan. The purpose of the meeting and the background on the WSIS process should be explained. Brainstorming on potential activities intended to achieve can provide an overview and motivation for the work. If there are already projects running it is advisable to implement them into the new strategy. Goals and objectives need to be identified, and respective roles and responsibilities have to be assigned to members of the planning group. Potential partners not represented at the meeting should be identified and contacted (also in terms of funding tactics). A timeline for further activities, including a date for the next meeting of the team should be made. After the meeting a plan ought to be written, which includes a listing of the key goals, a summary of some of the activities planned, the timeline, the budget and a listing of all the main people and organizations involved.

### **5.3.2 Capacity Building**

Experience has shown that NGOs need sound national backup and solid resources to be successful in implementing own strategies for participation at the WSIS. These mechanisms include a broad awareness of the topic, strong social participation, support of respective government, and decent knowledge of all issues related to the Summit. First, they enable people to create a real impact on policy-making at a national and local level. Secondly, they help create a movement to realize the potential of existing projects at a grassroots level.

### **National Campaigns and Consultations**

A national campaign involves many elements, from working with government departments, creating a national declaration, running workshops, or involving people into the process. It might also include concrete projects and community service, the creation of an ongoing national network to follow-up the Summit, and probably some funding. Besides, it requires a good team and a lot of communication and outreach.

National campaigns provide an explanation of the whole process, including Civil Society, governments, and private sector participation (main outcomes, opportunities, challenges). Regarding the WSIS, key elements are the discussion of related issues in a national context, identifying national priorities, and defining next steps. These include sharing information about current WSIS involvements in respective countries, identifying ICT policy issues relevant to stakeholders in the process, and the development of a contact list of people and organizations that are not at the consultation but who should be aware of the process. With the commitments of other supporters, engagement in regional or global WSIS initiatives (regional and thematic caucuses) should be sought of. (cp. TakingITGlobal, 2003).

At this level connections are of highest importance to gain a powerful basis and useful knowledge from other organizations and people in your country. Contacting relevant people is also important to be sure that others' efforts are not getting duplicated. Chances are that other communities are involved and also plan activities on their own.

Development of a contact database with following possible stakeholders:

- Community media
- ICT organizations
- Trade unions
- Human rights organizations
- Freedom of expression advocates
- Educational Institutions
- International organizations
- Activist organizations in different fields (environmentalists, health advocates, etc.)
- Academic and research institutions, e.g. media journalism and communication schools
- Seniors: managerial assistance, mentoring, resources to put their ideas into action, experience, advice, more solid infrastructure, material/financial/logistical resources, more influence and credibility than own organization.

Having founded a basis for the movement it is crucial to fill this aggregated potential with knowledge. Holding a national workshop about the Information Society might be a good starting point. It is advisable to cover following subjects: draft a summary of input received through other members of the working group. Develop concrete recommendations for refinements of the domestic policies of your government and draft own language on international ICT policy, such as for the WSIS. Invite other people involved in the process as to share experiences and explore potential future partnerships. Offer practical training or workshops on technology, media or education subjects and try to engage national and local media to cover the WSIS process. (cp. Andjelkovic, 2002).

### **5.3.3 Awareness Raising**

#### **Development of Content**

Useful content needs to be published to get the attention of the public and at the same time to inform those already interested in your efforts. Outreach can be achieved by creating a website where relevant content is made available via email and the web. This page could be a website of its own, or part of a national or regional Civil Society portal. Links to online official resources about the WSIS as well as to relevant information from other entities that track the WSIS process should be made.

Apart from face to face meetings and workshops on a smaller scale, it is vital to communicate outcome via press conferences, online conferences, and emails to contact list. Sharing information and skills can be also distributed through a webzine that breaks the cycle of political correctness and fuses ideas.

During the production of content it is useful to be aware of regional and international Civil Society perspectives on WSIS. Find out if any of your neighboring countries are engaging on this topic. Even though the United Nations is the host of the WSIS, national governments are the ones that make decisions. Being aware of perspectives in your region or internationally can be helpful if you are looking for support when lobbying your government.

### **Creation of a permanent structure**

To ensure continuous participation and to represent and facilitate Civil Society participation in global decision-making it is advisable to implement additional tools for promoting active participation: As a first rule, always try to keep people informed. Measure and celebrate progress (for example, if consensus is reached on an issue, or government includes a Civil Society representative in their delegation). Try to be inclusive and transparent in creating opportunities for different people to attend WSIS PrepComs and the Summit. Provide a decent legislative Framework for your movement, with proper project management and heterogeneous working groups (multiplier effect for a greater impact).

#### Concrete projects can help to warrant a permanent structure:

- Workshops (including topics like: ICT policies, Gender and ICT, ICT as a tool for social change, Internet rights/communication rights, Privacy issues, Secure online communications, Community media and ICT, E-governance, etc.)
- Awards to highlight achievements
- Grants
- North-South Partnerships
- Focus on young people
- Online volunteering
- Grass Root project teams (create teams based on synergies between projects, campaigners, fund raisers, expertise, lobby organizations etc.)

## **Connecting with Main Stakeholders**

Participating organizations: Make linkages to organizations that are going to be at the meeting to share information and opinions and ultimately achieve greater influence. Well-organized back-up from other NGOs can increase the pressure on government for certain outcomes that all want to see. Creating a network in advance also allows to organize for group work that will need to be done collectively at the meeting.

Governments: Identify relevant people within government. Important departments to target are: trade and industry, science and technology, communications, education, environment.

Civil Society: Is there any Civil Society involvement in the official WSIS preparatory process respective country?

Private Sector: Is the private sector represented in the WSIS delegation? If yes, consider making contact with them and including them in the consultation process.

United Nations and its Specialized Agencies: Are there any national offices of United Nations Agencies actively involved in the WSIS in respective country? For example, UNESCO has been very active in supporting national level WSIS. The ILO (International Labour Organisation) can be helpful for those working with the labor movement. United Nations Agencies can often be useful allies and sources of support for Civil Society.

Media: Try to meet with your country's media both at home and during the event. If a reporter is being sent to cover the meeting, try to meet with that individual before going – it might be easier to track them down at the meeting if you've already been in contact.

## **Lobbying for being part of a national government delegation**

There are often 'official' WSIS Delegations (mostly governmental) which welcome the participation of Civil Society representatives. It is advisable to know the delegates of your country. Make an appointment to see them and ask if they want to be involved in your campaign. In general, governments nominate representatives from their ministries to be involved in the WSIS. Mostly they are from communication, infrastructure or trade ministries, but the WSIS agenda is much more diverse and other departments which deal with education, women, youth, and development could also get involved.

As an official member of a government's WSIS delegation there are pros and cons that have to be considered. Advantages are the possible influence in the development of a national position together with governments. You can lobby to ensure the inclusion and treatment of key issues as well as needs/interests of Civil Society and it is possible to attend governmental meetings to monitor and report on the official process. It is also helpful to identify the public sector allies in other countries.

Disadvantages can include that you have to officially support your government's position in the WSIS process. It will not be possible to involve as much in external and independent Civil Society caucuses as you might want to and there are surely some limitations regarding raising contentious issues within your government. If there is no possibility to cooperate with government representatives, they should be at least invited to multi-stakeholder meetings, organized by your organization.

### **5.3.4 Strategic engagement within WSIS**

#### **Facilitation**

The obvious result of these efforts should lie in recognition of interests in official papers. However, other forms beyond the "formal" outcomes can include raising awareness of the issue in terms of Agenda setting through media, workshops, presentations, etc. at the Summit. New partnerships and collaborations between other groups with same interest can be a valuable goal to aim at.

Activities should include:

Providing formal input to the Summit process: through written submissions prior to every major preparatory meeting

Lobbying at the meetings to see own perspectives included: in official summit output (e.g. Declarations), especially to ensure the key role and needs of interest area to be recognized by governments and United Nations bodies.

#### **Strategies for successful Summit participation**

Develop a global outreach structure involving likeminded organizations and individuals active in the area of the Information Society at a national, regional and international level. Effectively communicate with different audiences, including through a regular newsletter, the media and formal reports. Produce national, regional and global declarations and input towards the political process. Actively participate within all the official meetings related to the WSIS, especially the preparatory meetings and regional meetings. At these meetings, ensure people are well-prepared and mainstreamed - active within business, government and Civil Society processes. Use the Summit itself as a showcase for your organization in the Information Society and a place for learning and the developing of new partnerships. Connect with key actors/organizations in society that address same issues - including other NGOs, trade unions, youth sections, the business community and international organizations. Consider participation in the process of the World Summit on the Information Society as just one small part of a much broader and more important movement to engage your organization in further summits.

### What to contribute?

- Attend various meetings of the decision-making process
- Add information about activities and ideas to the website
- Run trainings and share training materials with other organizations
- Focus on partnerships and alliances between own activities and projects
- Be an active fundraiser
- Offer internships amongst NGOs and enforce exchanges between them

### What is expected get out of?

- Opportunities for funding
- Visibility for your projects (marketing/promotion opportunities)
- Opportunities to participate in decision-making
- Knowledge that can relate to your activities (best practices)
- Deepen your reflection
- Connection to senior organizations (cp. Nardelli, 2002)

### **Some recommendations for United Nations participation**

One of the most important, yet most underestimated factors to be successful as a non-governmental organization at the United Nations is reading. It cannot be emphasized enough to fully get an overview of current documents and an overview who has been lobbying for what. International meetings don't take place in a complete bubble – the host country will affect how the meeting and side events are planned and carried out.

Five suggestions for thorough preparation:

Draft documents: draft documents which result from PrepComs form the basis of subsequent negotiations.

Global Civil Society positions: consultation of various national and international Civil Society groups' positions, to see if (and how) they differ from governments' and/or own point of view.

Lingo: United Nations use their own lingo and technical vocabulary related to the issues under discussion.

Rules: general rules and codes of conduct used should be known. Specific rules may change from meeting to meeting, depending on the level of potential security threats, but basic codes of conduct remain the same. Larger meetings also attract more organized demonstrations and consequently have increased security.

Government documents and positions: focus should be given on the official positions of respective government in the lead-up to the meeting. These include Preparatory Committee meetings, government consultations with stakeholders, and position as well as discussion papers. These government reports and papers may be public documents, so it is easy to obtain them.

## 5.4 Summary

The World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva was conducted with a genuine political will towards a better and fairer Information Society. Regardless of the controversial results of this summit it presented a change in global policy-making. Who would have thought that the Youth Caucus had been the most successful family member of Civil Society at the World Summit on the Information Society? Has there ever before been a common understanding of youth as “*learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers*” as it has been stated in the WSIS Declaration of Principles? (WSIS, 2003, December 13). Young people had been at the forefront of a United Nations Summit that might change the world. Surely it will take a while to justify this sentence, but as for now it seems clear that the Information Society – an abstract term from the scientific community – was brought to awareness to a broad public. The global agenda has a new phrase which will be filled with meaning and actions by the general public soon.

The WSIS Youth Caucus achieved a lot in bringing the Information Society to people. The innovative use of ICTs, paired with a strong sense of innovation and courage made it possible that more than 100 young leaders of tomorrow gathered in Geneva to think of new way of how to improve the world we are living in. The work of the WSIS Youth Caucus can be analyzed by breaking it down into following three best practice patterns: policy contribution, use of technology and management methods.

### **Best practice: policy contribution**

The World Summit on the Information Society, as a global forum for decision-makers, is an important venue to develop policies, create commitments, and forge partnerships to advance the potential of ICTs in human development. The Youth Caucus realized its chance to diffuse the idea that it is not about technology as the largest untapped resource in maximizing the potential of an Information Society – it is about young people, a huge and ever growing demographic that represents the majority of the world’s population. However, the paradox is that youth remain one of the most vulnerable and marginalized demographic groups.

- Youth unemployment rates are typically two to three times higher than for adults
- Youth are often the first victims in conflict areas, whether it be civilians or child soldiers
- Every ten minutes, five young people between the ages of 10-24 will have been infected with HIV/AIDS (Fielding, 2003).

Youth need to be engaged in decision-making processes related to the Information Society. Younger people are heavily represented in almost every category of Information Society work.

In many sectors, new information-based technologies are introduced to organizations through young professional staff members. They work in the development of software products, the establishment of technology infrastructure, and the development of internet communities.

They reinvent new media, cultural expression and entertainment. If the WSIS is to achieve its ambitious goals, it must address young people's needs and issues and co-opt their energy and expertise. (cp. WSIS Youth Caucus, 2002).

Being aware of the big gap between international policy-making and youth involvement, the Youth Caucus did not rely on the sole work of governments to include recognition of youth in the official Summit output. From the First Preparatory Committee on, young people took action and used the preparatory process as a global forum to mobilize support for concrete youth initiatives and partnership-based projects that would push the global youth-movement forward. The Youth Caucus' goal was to get a specific reference in the Declaration of Principles, highlighting their role in ICTs development, providing concrete support and commitments related to youth participation.

Success was on their side – besides the caucuses of women and human rights, youth were among the most effective Civil Society groups in Phase I. They had participated in previous United Nations processes and understood the importance of building relationships directly with national government delegations. They also provided timely and concise draft text which could be incorporated by the governments in the negotiations.

Through this process young people networked with many government delegations, with a lot of business people and a lot of other groups, which allowed the Youth Caucus to be able to implement and gain support for concrete projects in diverse communities. For example, the delegates of the Youth Caucus from Ghana and Romania came to Geneva together with their Presidents on their planes. That demonstrates that young people have really bridged the gap between their local projects and the official delegates. Another example was the support from governments: supporters from governmental delegations were necessary to provide input into the plenary. Especially Fiji was a very important partner of the Youth Caucus. Fiji ultimately put forward current language in Paragraph 11 ("Youth Paragraph").

### **Best practice: management methods**

Youth Caucus had very elaborated strategies how to tackle the World Summit on the Information Society. An extract of the most important parts of this strategy shall be explained:

Participants: Despite the fact that fellowships were extremely limited, approximately hundred young people representing a good diversity of regions, organizations and activities attended the Second Preparatory Meeting of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society.

Some of the organizations represented included Young Volunteers for Sustainable Development, Paradigm Initiative, TakingITGlobal, the World Association of the Scout Movement, the National Youth Councils of the Netherlands and Finland, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Russia's IT Association, the Global Knowledge Partnership, and many others.

Orientation and Preparation: Besides orientation sessions sourcebooks provided a compilation of information for Youth Caucus participants with details on the meeting, the WSIS process, the structure and operation of the Youth Caucus, key objectives for the Summit, a listing of known participants and their biographies, and some logistical tips.

Organization: a thorough structure for all participants and a specifically for the WSIS developed pocket guide made it easy to navigate through the plethora of the Summit.

Lobbying and Language: Openness and collaborative thinking were key strategies to approach governments and other Civil Society members. A separate language working group was established to provide fast and accurate language for the drafting process.

Events at the Summit: activities at the Summit revolved mostly around celebration, learning and awareness-raising on youth involvement in the Information Society. A working group of the Caucus was established to discuss the schedule of youth activities at the Summit, identify gaps and try and layout an agenda.

Communications activities: The primary communication activity of the Youth Caucus remained the newsletter, produced and distributed most days of the Preparatory Meetings.

National activities promotion: A working group to help promote local activities met twice at the Prepcom, with the goal to promote existing campaigns and to encourage new campaigns in countries where activities were not already taking place.

Liaising with other groups and government delegations: the Youth Caucus worked as a team to liaise with numerous other groups in the process including government delegations and Civil Society (together with Caucuses and working groups). (cp. Moraitis, 2003b).

### **Best practice: use of technology**

The Youth Caucus which is facilitated by TakingITGlobal uses a people-centric and technology-enabled approach, focused around a global online community. TakingITGlobal is a new type of international organization for the information age, with the central component of being a global online community.

Although technology has technically allowed people to come together, not many have actually been able to create a dynamic, supportive, engaging space that truly allows people who come from different backgrounds, cultures and world views to come together and to work together in creating a better world. The organization and consequently the WSIS Youth Caucus is built upon an online network that is inherently global. Through an integrated online system members can be reached, projects of global scale implemented, and information about activities shared. Much of the online community is decentralized, with members able to communicate and develop peer-to-peer collaborations without the need to pass through any central organizational bureaucracy. (cp. Moraitis, 2003a).

Entrepreneurship and the innovative vision to create a website for youth that serves as a global platform to empower young people were the main technological assets for the Youth Caucus to be able to work for a future of democratic participation and open Civil Society. (cp. Jantunen/Doshi, 2003).

One of the most important and innovative aspects of the Summit has been the culmination of young people from all countries around the world. This is both critical and positive because looking at the demographics of the world's least developed countries, the vast majority continues to be young people under the age of thirty. We can either look at them as part of the problem, or empower them as part of the solution. Before the World Summit on the Information Society these young people have been leading national campaigns in more than twenty countries around the world. Over 100 young people attended the Summit – from countries like Romania, India, Austria, Canada, Brazil, USA, Afghanistan, working with their governments to develop national strategies and to really understand what the Information Society is about. The Youth Caucus was the only grouping in the summit process, be it of the family-members of Civil Society, business or government, that had been thinking about what will happen tomorrow, since the World Summit on the Information Society has not ended in Geneva.

*“Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies.” (Kofi Annan as cited in Fielding, 2003).*

## **6. Conclusion**

This thesis is the result of enthusiastic research over a period of more than half a year. The seed was planted at a lecture of Professor Robin Mansell on "Internet and Society" and grew with the participation in both the 52<sup>nd</sup> World Conference of the International Press Institute, and in a week-long session at the renowned Salzburg Seminar on "Digital Inclusion". Due to my involvement as a youth delegate during the first Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, I was able to obtain firsthand information and a deeper understanding of the Information Society and its controversial issues from both sides, the government and Civil Society. Recognizing the increasing importance of a multilateral approach for successful global policy-making, I realized that the involvement of Civil Society as an active partner of governments in the decision making progress is absolutely essential. This participation of the civil sector in global politics is necessary in order to sustain a social balance within modern societies. There is no doubt for me that we actually live in the Information Age, and that we all have to adapt to the new rules of this game. A fresh and open mind, paired with critical and independent thinking are the ingredients for a prosperous society creating an affluent economy, balanced and open politics, and empowered individuals who care for both personal wealth and success in life, as well as for the common public good and basic human rights.

### **6.1 Summary and Achievements**

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to for non-governmental organizations to be provided with an evaluative framework in order to successfully influence global policy-making within the context of the United Nations. The work focuses mainly on the World Summit on the Information Society and is primarily intended to guide interested NGOs through the preparatory process of the second Phase of this Summit in the year 2005. Especially the roadmap which has been created to empower organizations with the necessary knowledge and skills, presents step-by-step instructions for setting capacity building, awareness raising and strategic engagement within the WSIS. From the setup of a coordination group to the establishment of a national campaign, to advice on facilitation at the summit itself, the roadmap gives insight and methodological knowledge that is needed for newcomers to the global arena of diplomacy in the context of the United Nations. The roadmap has been developed based on my personal experience with the work in the WSIS Youth Caucus, and on information from other members of the Civil Society family.

The thesis benefits from the current significance of its topic. The first part of the World Summit on the Information Society has just been completed and the second phase will be in the year 2005. By that time a lot of action will have taken place. Now is the right time to get involved in the preparatory process, since the first preparatory conference for the Tunis-Summit will take place 23-26 June, 2004.

However, even without this connection to its present significance, this work provides a broadly valid overview on the Information Society, ICT policies, Civil Society and United Nations Summits.

The overall structure, goals and main intentions of the thesis are depicted in Figure 11.



Figure 11: Thesis Model

The thesis is structured into three main sections. The first part covers modern theories of the Information Society with a focus on recent works over the last ten years. It provides a balanced overview of the most influential scholarly authors on this topic. Different views, both positive and critical, help to understand the great diversity of the Information Society which affects domains like the economy, culture, politics, and private life. Looking at the changing role of governments and the global marketplace due to cyberspace deepen the comprehension of a change that is commonly perceived, but often not understood. Additionally presented are theoretical concepts of Civil Society, with an excursus to the explanation of non-governmental organizations, and the connection between governments and Civil Society in global governance is explained as well. The roles of ICT policies reviewed from a governmental point as well as from Civil Society are studied, and global decision-making analyzed. The question of the role of the civil sector within global e-policy has been answered.

The second part describes the youth organization TakingITGlobal, which acts as a role model for the successful influence on United Nations summits. Wrapped up in a case study, this organization is presented in detail and its strategies and working methods are evaluated. The work of TakingITGlobal as the facilitator of the WSIS Youth Caucus is analyzed and best practices are deduced. A critical analysis of the World Summit on the Information Society itself presents mechanisms, results, and annotations, in which the case study finds its frame of reference.

The third element presents a roadmap, which details in a “step-by-step”-approach of necessary measures in order to take part in the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis 2005. These guidelines are presented in a useful format and have been gathered from analyzing the Summit, TakingITGlobal, and the Youth Caucus. These three elements together equip my target group, non-governmental organizations of every range, with essential skills to represent their own interests in the second Phase of the WSIS, or any other United Nations summit.



## 6.2 Answers to Research Questions

At the beginning of my work I stated the following two research questions:

- I. What are the factors that enable a non-governmental organization to influence decisions at a United Nations summit like the World Summit on the Information Society?
- II. What are the special requirements for Civil Society members regarding their use of Information and Communication Technology to successfully engage in the decision process of global policy-making?

The first question can be answered by the three factors for success, as depicted in Figure 11 which empower non-governmental organizations to effectively represent their concerns at global summits and conferences.

All the factors build on each other and provide the framework for achievement:

- **More experience on the Information Society:**  
this includes understanding of recent theories about the Information Society and ICT policies, which provides the necessary foundation for further action;
- 
- **Knowledge of United Nations structure:**  
Awareness of the United Nations structure and its working methods are essential to get an overview of the framework in which global policy is being made;
- 
- **Influencing global decision-making:**  
the ability to actively engage in global policy-making decisions as a recognized member of Civil Society can open the doors for representing a group’s interests.

The second question dealt with special requirements necessary to successfully engage in global policy-making with the use of ICTs. Generally it can be said that ICTs serve multiple functions for organizations to engage in policy processes. As for the Internet, these include email lobbying of public officials and policy elites; networking with related associations and organizations; mobilizing activists and members using action alerts, newsletters, and emails either to inform, or gain pledges; raising funds and recruiting supporters; and communicating their message to the public via traditional news media. (cp. Selian, 2002).

A special online platform has proven to be a very effective instrument for disseminating information in order to showcase local opportunities, statements, and perspectives that truly reflect the diversity of the network; and to grow a resource that allows members to connect with opportunities that relate to their work.

In my view, the full potential of using ICTs within Civil Society has not been realized yet. Even though an increasingly amount of NGOs have access, they do not exactly know what to do with it. A more strategic use of these new technologies would enable organizations to increase the impact of their campaigns and projects.

### **6.3 Contribution to Knowledge and Personal Findings**

Apart from the research questions four consequences can be drawn from this thesis:

#### **First Consequence:**

Theories on the Information Society cover a broad spectrum of human life, but strangely do not focus specifically on Civil Society. However, nearly every author provides a detailed description of what the world will look like in this new Information Age. Especially Dyson and Leadbeater draw a visionary picture of this new society. Even though their descriptions might be too bold on first sight, I have no doubt that Civil Society will make its way in this new era.

Nobody knows if these societal changes will develop into an equitable society with enough resources for everyone to meet the needs of individual empowerment and to train the capability of ICTs, but as it seems now, Civil Society is an accepted stakeholder in global policy-making processes. Recent efforts of the United Nations to apply a multi-stakeholder approach to every summit or conference seem to be a positive sign for this alliance of different interests on the highest level.

### **Second Consequence:**

As seen from the history of ICT policies, governments mainly seek to increase economic growth to gain advantages on the global market. Their programs to equip people with modern ICT skills are aimed at boosting trained workforce, which is certainly a legitimate intention of governments, since well-trained citizens have succeeded in not only living a prosperous private life but also in conserving the highly bureaucratic system of today's governments. In my opinion, the rise of a global Civil Society was made possible by two major facts.

First, a new awareness of the public of what is possible and the real-time media coverage of global events encouraged individuals to take action. Instead of highly organized demonstrations, individuals gather spontaneously when they have a common goal and separate when shared action is not needed anymore. ICTs made a major contribution to this change. Second, government's tolerance of global action advocacy groups and transnational Civil Society is highly sophisticated in terms of a strategic plan, and not only because of the power of the organized crowd. A healthy society is characterized by its pluralistic character. The mixture of global aggressors and pacifist movements is tolerable, as long as they are in a maintained balance. Another argument for the success of modern advocacy groups is that as long as Civil Society complies with the basic agenda of governments they find support; if not, they are heavily criticized and turned down.

### **Third Consequence:**

The World Summit on the Information Society was planned as a moment in history when governments and Civil Society from around the world would come together to acknowledge the power of ICTs and to find solutions to shape a better world. Looking back in history shows that discussions on the Information Society have always been loaded with a lot of potential conflict. In the 1960s, the conflict between East and West, between the promotion of the "free flow of information" in the capitalist world and strong control of media and information by the state in the communist world. In the 1970s and 1980s the conflict about the "New World Information and Communication Order" (NWICO), especially the "right to communicate", culminated with the cancellation of the United States' membership in the UNESCO. The current dispute about basically the same topics, especially on the question who owns the communication infrastructure and on the politics of access and connectivity seems to be an endless quarrel which will be continued in Tunis 2005.

However, these confrontations are not surprisingly existent: the further the preparatory process moved on, the more confrontations between governments and Civil Society turned up. Additionally to the already difficult relation between governments and Civil Society, a second dimension of conflict arose within governments.

The United States of America and the European Union on the one side realized the need to overcome the Digital Divide and were willing to provide financial aid in form of a “Digital Solidarity Agenda”, but on the other side countries like China, India, and South Africa, supported the idea of increasing governmental power over the Internet.

#### **Fourth Consequence:**

As often stated in this thesis, the world is changing. Local issues become global overnight, new markets emerge, and young people represent the most successful family member within Civil Society throughout the WSIS process. During the last years a shift in the international approach toward youth has taken place. Young people not only constitute the vast majority in most developing countries, they are also the most avid users of technology and are often a driving force behind technological entrepreneurship and innovation.

The work of the WSIS Youth Caucus exemplifies that a part of the younger generation can act as a role model for other young people. Young people from over thirty countries, have themselves completely organized their own involvement at the WSIS; they have participated in all preparatory conferences and successfully lobbied with governments for a reference to young people in the official Summit Declaration. Young people have become the leading agents of change because they are not tied to existing mechanisms and procedures.

Whatever effect the World Summit on the Information Society will have for our future, it has without doubt taken the first steps toward a better and fairer Information Society while keeping in mind that this road will be long and full of pitfalls.

Last but not least there is one important thing to stress as an additional goal of this thesis: though the emphasis of all the analysis is on the importance of information and information technology, there is another major issue the summit and comparable events deal with: information is one thing, but communication is another. Especially the great variety of peoples, nations, organizations and associations which meet at international events like the WSIS opens up a high potential for the exchange of, as well as the tolerance for ideas of others, which happens regardless of the agenda. The Summit and the complete organizational framework around it develop a broad platform where totally different people, ages and professions come together. Completely different intentions and interests meet and become the subject of qualified critics. Lobbies get together, which might never happen in the outside world. This is the deeper meaning of the Summit, whereas it is mostly assumed that United Nations activities are limited to discussions, decisions and declarations, and come up with a paper in the end

However, information has to be communicated and is, therefore, never objective. Given the trends of rising globalization and flooding information, it seems fundamental that the way information is chosen and transported makes the very difference. In addition to the significance of the Summit, the enthusiasm of the participants, and the high organizational expenditures, it is of tremendous importance that the highlights of these international efforts become disseminated, translated and interpreted, not only by papers but by people.

I would like to conclude this work with the words of T. S. Eliot:

*Where is the life we have lost in living?*

*Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?*

*Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*

## 7. List of Figures

Figure 1: Policies for shaping an integrated ICT Structure .....	25
Figure 2: The Preparatory Process of the WSIS Geneva Phase.....	38
Figure 3: United Nations hosted World Summits.....	41
Figure 4: Structure of the World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva Phase.....	43
Figure 5: The Road to Geneva .....	46
Figure 6: Statistic of Attendance from WSIS, Geneva Phase.....	48
Figure 7: Chart of Civil Society Structure.....	52
Figure 8: Main Themes of the ICT for Development Platform .....	53
Figure 9: TakingITGlobal Homepage.....	68
Figure 10: Structure of the WSIS Youth Caucus .....	73
Figure 11: Thesis Model .....	90

## 8. List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies, a term created to refer to the fusion of computing and telecommunications technologies (including the Internet), which are the matrix within information and digital media are created, distributed and accessed.
IPI	International Press Institute
ITU	International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations agency concerned with broadcasting, telephony and other communications technologies. The lead agency in organizing the WSIS.
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals (adopted Declaration at the United Nations Millennium Summit)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Para	Paragraph
R&D	Research and Development
SMEs	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises
TIG	TakingITGlobal
UN	United Nations
WSIS	United Nations World Summit on the Information Society

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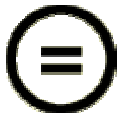
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