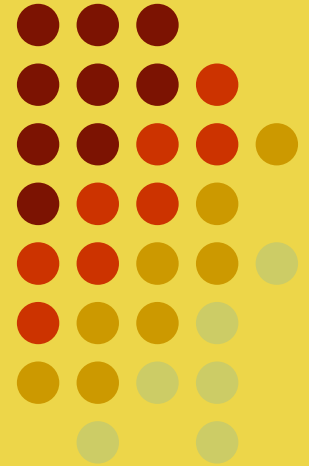


International political communication and
the role of civil society:
words and networks in the
World Summit on the Information Society
*Reflections on governance, participation and the
changing scope of political action*

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Reflection on the Civil Society Agenda

Setting the context

Global change and transformations in political communication: non-state actors, roles, modes and discourses



Our analysis is a reflection on changing structures of civil society in the global context, towards a better understanding of political processes. We assume that:

- Trans-national connections emerge from and create linkages between inter-national, national and local spaces
- Focusing on **on-line/off-line communication**, on **praxes** of involvement in political processes and on the elaboration of common **discourses** are all crucial aspects for our understanding of such connections
- Global civil society: not (only) an elite (nor an homogenous) experience

The UN World Summit on the Information Society



(Geneva, December 2003 – Tunis, November 2005)

- An un-precedent situation in global communication governance (but not the first time in the history of international communication debates)
- **Convergence** of strands of debates, issues and actors + CS realities
- The struggle over words and meaning: a world of words

Civil Society @ WSIS



Some research questions

1. How to define the “boundaries” for GCS? Which ideas/versions of civil society?
2. How can we assess the growing self-perception of civil society as an actor in global governance?
3. What can we say about the impact of civil society in the WSIS process?

Different “realities” of civil society converging at WSIS ...



Convergences: themes and subjects, experience in international contexts, historical or recent involvement on communication issues + level of institutionalization

- Institutional and NGO tradition (from art 71 of the UN Charter, through ECOSOC rules and Res 56/183 of December 2001 to the Cardoso Report, June 2004)
- Globalization from below, social movement, contentious politics (from the '70s, through the mobilizations around Communication to the WSF)

Civil Society @ WSIS: a plural reality



How to look at civil society in WSIS? Praxis and discourse

CS convergences at WSIS	practice	visions
within civil society	who what how	Lexicon textual analysis of civil society documents throughout the preparatory process, focus on “governance” (the who, what and how of global governance within civil society discourse)
relation to official process	who what how	Lexicon textual analysis of official WSIS documents together with those elaborated by civil society in two stages: prepcom 2 and the final Summit (the who, what and how of global governance comparing official positions and civil society visions)

The method: applying lexical-textual analysis



- Documents selection
- Pooling texts in a corpus
- Texts clustered according to Phases in WSIS
- Direct coding of texts in textual units (then CTU: recoding through lexicalization in multi-words, phrases and sequences of words “civil_society”, “global_culture_of_cyber_security”) – through TALTAC
- Two ways contingency tables: CTU per clusters/phases
- Selection of CTUs referring to governance (analysis conducted on 165 CTUs with frequency > 3)

3 analysis of the tables:

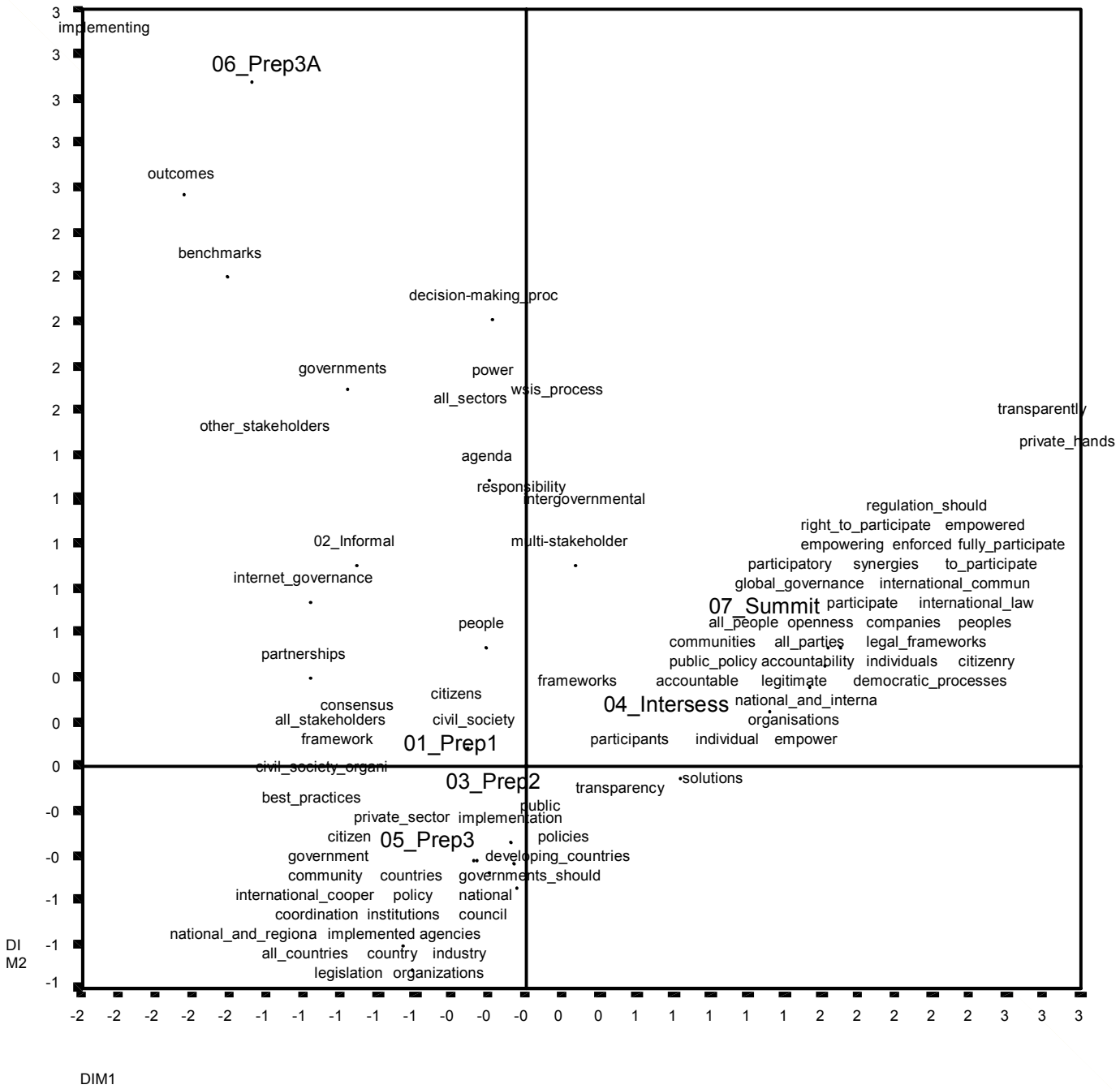
- Exclusive CTU
- Specific CTU
- Correspondence analysis

Looking at Civil Society as an actor in global politics

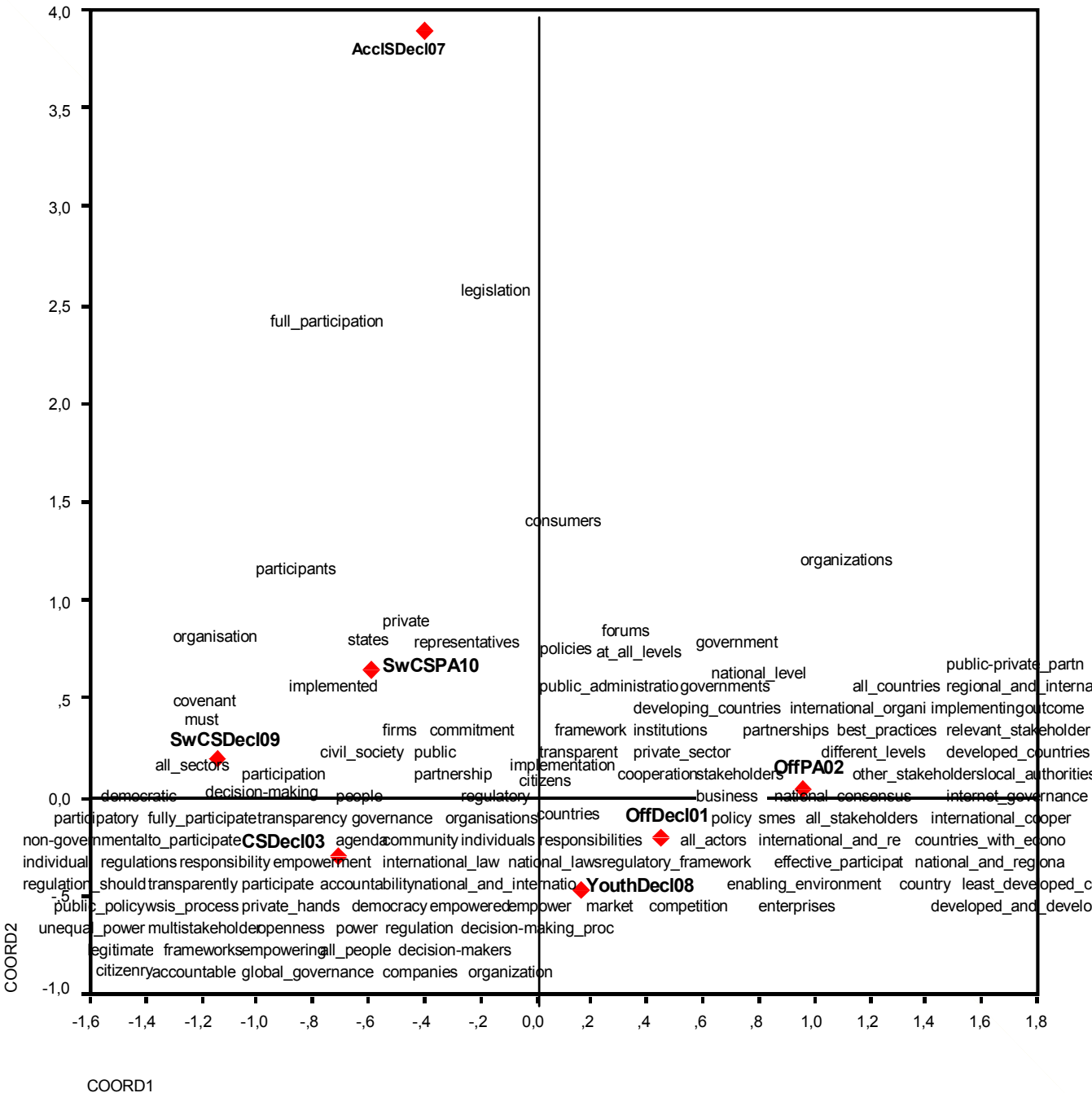


How to
conceive
“governance”

- Actors (who)
- Levels (where)
- Modes (what)
- Quality (how)



**Civil Society
discourse:
an open
ended
exercise,
consistency
over time, a
learning
process**



**Civil society,
governance
and self-
perception as
a global actor:
bottom-up
perspective,
integrative
approach,
plurality and
the “right to
participate”**

Final remarks

The changing scope of international political communication



- Converging versions of civil society: plurality and consistency + capacity to develop structures and norms + common discourse and identification as a sector in relation to others
- Not just a trans-national coalition/network: a global dynamic of social movement in action + continuity of exchange + the “glocal connection”
- CS and the official event – conflicting visions of governance: an aggregative (top-down) model vs. integrative (bottom-up) model of governance

Civil Society and impact?

WSIS and beyond

Directions for further research



- I. Output \neq outcome (broaden agenda, convergence within sector, continuity in interaction, presence in official process phase II...). Yet we are working on WSIS I documents to assess impact of CS discourse
- II. Focus on MSPs (beyond the rhetoric, looking at other experiences, promoting dialogues among experiences and the idea of evaluating processes of participation)
- III. An emerging global movement on communication rights? (transnational, multilevel, plural, networking: how to represent? How to study?)



I - Working on WSIS I documents to assess the impact of CS discourse

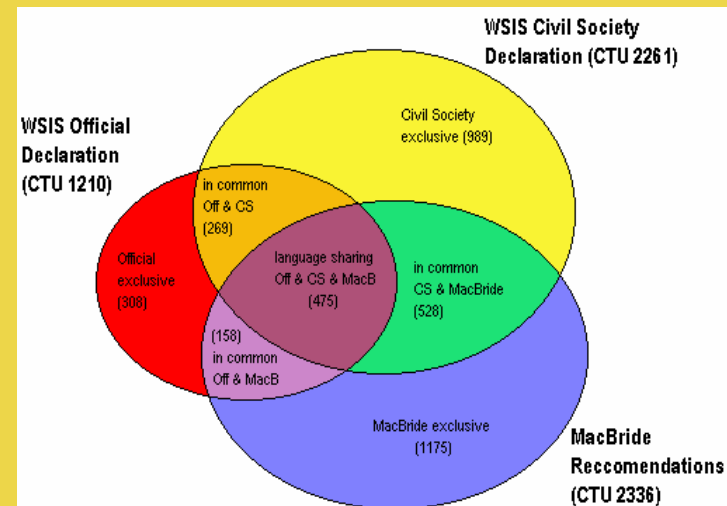
we are now able to take into consideration official drafts and civil society input documents in different stages of the process and assess the impact that civil society has had in those stages. We shall develop a three step analysis, which should allow us to uncover different aspects of civil society impact.

We shall consider documents from two stages of the process - prepcom2 and prepcom 3 – comparing the language of civil society contributions and official drafts that entered and exit those phases. Then we shall review the entirety of civil society inputs and writings in relation to the final official Declaration of Principles.

Looking at different stages in the process should allow not only to assess the actual “impact” of civil society contributions on the final document but also to reflect on the relation between potential/actual impact and the participatory mechanisms that characterized different stages in the process as well as the process overall, which is certainly to be conceived as an evolving learning process from this point of view.

We are fully aware of the fact that a number of other aspects (individual states’ interests, issues that entered the debate, impact of other stakeholders, such as the private sector) were at play in those processes; yet it is important to be able to identify overlappings and differences with a specific focus on civil society contributions.

Below: an example of what has been done with documents from WSIS and the MacBride Report



II – Focus on Multi-Stakeholder Processes (MSPs)



- Seminar in Venice, 22-23 November 2004: practice, reflections, pre-conditions, levels...
- Contacts with earthsummit.org/msp (Multistakeholder processes for governance and sustainability, 2002)
- WSIS working group on CS structures for phase II

Plans (and call for cooperation): EU IST support action funding to develop a framework for MSP assessment in communication policies

II – Focus on MSPs: synthesis from Venice colloquium



levels

issues

MSPs

international/
global



national



local
(regions, provinces,
cities)

discussion
deliberation
decision

resources:
time
competencies
finance

formal and
informal
exchange
(where is
innovation?)
+
the role of
individuals

culture of
participation
(what
conception of
participation?
role of different
subjects?)

need to
consolidate
experiences
(and
communicate
them) +
role of clusters

issue based
/thematics
networks?
(role of actors?
single model?)

desirable?
necessary?
inevitable?

representativity
legitimacy
accountability
transparency
integrity

externalities
interest of
mobilizers



II - An emerging global movement on communication rights? Looking at WSIS

At

Regional Caucus
 Thematic Caucus
 Sectorial Caucus

