Locating Civil Society Participation in WSIS

1-5.30pm, 24th April 2006

Oxford Internet Institute
One St Giles, Oxford OX1 3JS

This seminar is the final event in a series funded by the ESRC:

'Critical perspectives on the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS): civil society participation and issues (ESRC)' (RES-451-26-0295)

Seminar Outline

Civil society participation in a range of international forums and governance processes has been strengthening and changing in character over recent years. To what extent is civil society participation in WSIS reflecting, and to what extent is it distinct from, these patterns? Issues for discussion include:

- Civil society participation in WSIS seems to have split between those who have become deeply involved in the notionally 'technical' issues, such as who allocates domain names, and those whose primary interest is in the way ICTs should be used to support broader goals such as the Millennium Development Goals. Is this distinctive to WSIS or can similar cleavages be identified at other summits?
- WSIS was distinctive as a UN summit in taking place in two stages (2003 & 2005). Did this characteristic, and WSIS's explicit commitment to a multi-stakeholder approach encourage civil society to engage more and protest less about the process in comparison to other summits – or was it just that the issues were seen as less important to the key concerns of civil society groups?
- Why have some major UK civil society organisations which have been prominent in other international forums not participated in WSIS?
- How should we judge the success of civil society participation in WSIS in comparison to participation in other international forums or governance processes?
- Are there any lessons to be learnt by civil society groups involved in pursuing information society issues from observation of non-governmental action in other forums or governance processes?

Agenda

12.45-1.30pm	**Networking lunch and coffee**
1.30pm	**Introductions and welcome** Bill Dutton
1.45pm	**Locating Civil Society Participation in WSIS** Sonia Liff (Warwick Business School and OII)
2.00pm	**Civil society engagement in suprastate governance: the democratisation of globalisation** Jan Aart Scholte (Warwick University)
2.40pm	**Getting gender on the agenda: unravelling the macro-dynamics of the new information age.** Gillian Youngs (University of Leicester)
3.20pm	**Break**
3.50pm	**Indymedia and the organisation of civil society** Andre Spicer, (Warwick Business School), Steffen Bohm, (Univ. of Essex) (tbc), Sian Sullivan (Univ. of East Anglia) (tbc)
4.30pm	**Discussion** Bart Cammaerts (LSE) Claudia Padovani (Univ. of Padova, Italy) William Drake (Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility) (tbc)
5.15pm	**Directions for future research?**
5.30pm	End