



UNRISD NEWS

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Bulletin

Register for

UNRISD Email Alerts

and stay up to date on the latest UNRISD publications, events and research findings!

In taking advantage of this free, personalized service, you will be notified via email when the information you need is updated on the UNRISD Web site.

To register for Email Alerts—or to change your profile—go to www.unrisd.org/alerts.

Information Societies and Social Change

Michael Powell

For some years, responses to the idea of an “information revolution” have been similar to reactions to the sighting of an unidentified flying object: if you believe in it, you see it; and if you do not, it has no meaning for you. Although most of us face ever-greater interaction with new information and communication technology (ICT) in our daily lives, whether this amounts to a revolution remains open to question. Social scientists, for example, have yet to see the kinds of radical changes in societal power relationships that characterize their definition of a revolution. Calls for shifts in development priorities—toward closing the digital divide, promoting national e-

strategies or designing the information society, for example—have thus generated considerable debate.

Perhaps the relatively weak outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) reflect, in part, the uncertainty that many in the development community feel about the subject. Seán Ó Siochrú’s contribution to this issue of *UNRISD News*, with specific reference to WSIS, and Jean-Claude Guédon’s wider analysis both describe, and situate in their social and historical contexts, highly significant differences of vision and approach to any emerging information society. ▶ page 2

Inside . . .

ESSENTIAL MATTER — Information Societies and Social Change • The (Dis)information Society?

REQUIRED READING **INSIDE COVERAGE** — Social Knowledge and International Policy Making:

Exploring the Linkages • *Research for Social Change* (UNRISD Fortieth Anniversary Report) • Corporate Social Responsibility and Development: Towards a New Agenda? • Social Policy in Late Industrializers

• UNRISD Events in 2003 • UN World Summits and Civil Society Engagement • Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector • New UNRISD Research on Commercialization, Privatization and Universal Access to Water • UNRISD Policy Report on Gender and Development: 10 Years after Beijing

• New UNRISD Research on HIV/AIDS • Solon Barraclough, 1922–2002 **GLOBAL RESOURCES**

THE LAST WORD — Failure and Success at WSIS, by Seán Ó Siochrú

While there are numerous perspectives on the information society, they may (arguably) be boiled down to two visions: one, a vision of society where knowledge is a commodity sold to consumers in protected markets; and the other, a vision where societies gain economic and social value from relatively free and unfettered communication of knowledge between citizens. This divergence does not represent a mere difference of opinion; rather, it evokes contradictory and competitive models of what, in terms of economic and social organization, the information society might consist. The fact that these models are developing and competing within the same societies makes analysis of information-related change all the more difficult.

However, awareness is growing that there is not (and cannot be) a *single* information society; rather, there must be a range of possible ones. And more importantly, there is increasing recognition that the kinds of information societies that emerge will be influenced by deliberate decisions with regard to policy, investment and regulation. This recognition should move the debate beyond vague and sometimes fantastic visions of the future, to more informed discussions of the choices that we face—and of their social consequences.

Overdue though they may be, such discussions will not be easy. There are many overlapping issues, much potential for confusion and, as Guédon reminds us, an often far-from-simple balance to be achieved between advantages and disadvantages. Nor do previous political or economic preferences necessarily provide an adequate guide for current responses. What, for example, is the pro-business response to the competing demands of free markets for small businesses, and protected markets for transnational corporations (TNCs)? And is it more labour-friendly to defend existing organizational norms, with the limited but real rights

they offer, or to develop new forms of organization in support of the flexible workforces required by networked enterprises? And what about gender issues? The growth of yet another industry with a disproportionate number of men in decision-making and better-paid roles would seem to embed gender inequity within the very foundations of the information society,

Awareness is growing that there is not (and cannot be) a single information society; rather, there must be a range of possible ones. And more importantly, there is increasing recognition that the kinds of information societies that emerge will be influenced by deliberate decisions with regard to policy, investment and regulation.

even before considering the greater barriers women face in terms of access to and use of ICT. However, where women have secured access to such technology, there are powerful examples of its potential as a tool with which to create non-hierarchical networks, to break out of isolation, and to develop and maintain social, economic, educational and political links.

To such questions must be added the dimensions of time and place. According to the hype, the information revolution is supposed to render these obsolete. Yet the WSIS documentation implies that the information society is more advanced in industrialized countries, with the rest yet again aspiring to “catch up”. And it is clear which countries and corporations are the

keenest to promote and the most likely to benefit from a global ICT-based economy. However, the notion that this represents the only way forward is highly debatable, and the view that there can be some kind of international model for a single information society would appear to be absurd. Knowledge, culture and the exchange of information are key and dynamic features of all human societies, and each employs the available tools, new and old, according to the potential of such tools to contribute to particular societal settings. How else can one explain the use of electronic mail among Brazilian labour organizations and South African civil society organizations fighting apartheid, before it was commonly adopted by the multilateral agencies and TNCs that now claim a leadership role in promoting and explaining the new reality?

Decision makers must consider the possible relations between local realities, and global threats and opportunities, before determining the most appropriate development strategies. The inevitable result of such decision making—interlaced with autonomous processes of economic and social change—will, in the North as well as the South, be a range of different societies with differing levels of information-centredness and varying degrees of integration with the digital aspects of the global economy. Blind faith in and pursuit of often poorly understood and incompletely developed models is almost certainly the wrong approach.

It is to be hoped that research will help debates and decision making to progress beyond their current limitations. One problem, however, is that the research issues are as complex and multifaceted as the policy ones. There are overlaps and gaps between disciplines, geographic focuses of research and even, given the speed of technological innovation, timelines. UNRISD has been studying this subject area

since 1997, with several projects on information technology and social development. This work has resulted in a range of publications,¹ including those by Cees Hamelink, Manuel Castells and Antonio Pasquali, which offer a conceptual overview of some of the fundamental issues at stake. Other publications—for example, those by Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara, Judith Adler Hellman, and Seán Ó Siochrú and Bruce Girard—offer clear analyses of specific issues in development-related work: the digital divide, distance education and media governance. A major project with a group of Senegalese researchers produced an empirically based description of the impact and use of ICT in a number of different sectors in that country. And most recently, the book *Communicating in the Information Society*, which was launched at WSIS, emphasized the range of areas affected by informational change, in particular some that were receiving inadequate attention.

But more needs to be done if research is to make the hoped-for contributions to understanding the relationship of informational changes to societies and, thus, to public policy. In September 2003, therefore, UNRISD hosted a small international workshop, Understanding Informational Developments: Mapping a Future Research Agenda, with researchers and specialists from academic institutions, civil society and multilateral organizations. Participants agreed that much of the international discourse in this area lacks rigorous conceptual or evidential basis and that the research community, despite considerable output, has yet to offer clear answers to the fundamental questions of the links between informational change and social and economic development.

The workshop discussed a number of possible remedies to this situation, two of which may be pursued in future UNRISD work. First, there is the need for a more collaborative effort to map

out and explore current research worldwide. And this research should be more clearly labelled for what it is: project evaluation, market research, academic research or policy proposal. Above all, when one considers the range of relevant subtopics—from governance of radio frequencies to village-level anti-poverty strategies, for example—the importance of contextualization cannot be overstated. Put quite simply: to what and to whom is this research relevant?

Second, work on the links between informational issues and social change needs to be more focused, and a research approach that could provide such focus was identified at the Senegal workshop. One of the problems with ICT research is that numerous departure points are created by particular disciplinary or organizational concerns. Past UNRISD contributions have emphasized the importance of social processes, while much of the policy discourse tends to be oriented around technology. But if the object of study is the *information society*, then the starting point must be the *society*. This does not mean that research has to be based exclusively in the social sciences, but that it needs to incorporate a focus on people and the social processes in which they are engaged.

Two questions serve to illustrate such an approach: How and why are people using information and communication in their daily lives? And how are new technologies influencing these processes? It may sound simple. “Politics come first” was an organizing principle used by the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) in managing the chaotic change from liberation war to independent state in Mozambique. “It’s the economy, stupid” was former US President Bill Clinton’s guide to winning elections. Neither described simple processes, but it would be hard to be clearer about the focus.

¹ This article refers to the following UNRISD publications.

Manuel Castells, *Information Technology, Globalization and Social Development*, Discussion Paper 114, 1999.

Momar-Coumba Diop (ed.), *Le Sénégal à l'heure de l'information: Technologies et société*, UNRISD and Editions Karthala, Paris, 2002.

Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochrú (eds.), *Communicating in the Information Society*, 2003.

Cees Hamelink, *New Information and Communication Technologies, Social Development and Cultural Change*, Discussion Paper 86, 1997.

Judith Adler Hellman, *The Riddle of Distance Education: Promise, Problems and Applications for Development*, Programme Paper TBS 9, 2003.

Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara, *The Development Divide in a Digital Age: An Issues Paper*, Programme Paper TBS 4, 2001.

Seán Ó Siochrú and Bruce Girard with Amy Mahan, *Global Media Governance: A Beginner's Guide*, UNRISD and Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Lanham, MD, 2002.

Antonio Pasquali, “A brief descriptive glossary of communication and information (Aimed at providing clarification and improving mutual understanding)”, in Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochrú (eds.), *Communicating in the Information Society*, 2003.

Michael Powell co-ordinates the UNRISD project on Information Technology and Social Development. More information about the Institute’s research and publications under this project is available at www.unrisd.org.

The (Dis)information Society?

Jean-Claude Guédon

The dream of subsuming the complex realities of human societies under one single concept is obviously quite tempting. The “information society” fits well within this dream. It was initially propelled by the extraordinary evocative power of Claude Shannon’s mathematical formalization of information. And with Norbert Wiener’s sweeping and exciting extrapolations, information began to appear as one of the fundamental constituents of the universe, a bit like space-time and matter. Soon enough, information was marshalled to revisit a number of scientific fields in interesting ways: for example, the conceptualization of DNA as a message carrier based on a four-character alphabet.

The rapidly growing importance of information as a concept, however, could not have spawned an information society all by itself; at best, it could only have prepared the ground for it and done so in an unintended manner. But its very importance and presence made it appear as a kind of juicy discursive morsel that was too good to be ignored. Various sectors of industry and commerce, not to speak of governments, began to broadcast new phrases based on “information”, such as “information society” and “information age”. These phrases appeared to have captured something essentially human. It looked as if everything could be both dematerialized and neatly subsumed under a prior, more encompassing category: information. With enough information, it seemed, one could “know” and, therefore, solve any problem, material or spiritual.

The year 1980 seems a good date to mark the emergence of “information society” as a phrase. That year in Tokyo, Yoneji Masuda equated it with the

post-industrial society; and in the United States, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) aired a documentary titled *The Information Society*. The concept of the post-industrial society had been popularized in the 1970s by sociologists such as Theodore Roszak and Daniel Bell, but the term information society conveyed an

The rapidly growing importance of information as a concept, however, could not have spawned an information society all by itself.... Various sectors of industry and commerce, not to speak of governments, began to broadcast new phrases based on ‘information’, such as ‘information society’ and ‘information age’.

intuitive meaning that post-industrial society did not: what came after the industrial society remained unclear in the popular mind; information society served to name it.

The 1980s saw (or missed) the Internet discreetly making its way to success. More visibly, various video-text devices were catching the attention of the media: Prestel (United Kingdom), BTX (Germany), Alex (Canada) and Minitel (France). Only Minitel succeeded (somewhat) and survived, but they all helped raise to new heights the information society

hype: all that humanity needed to overcome just about any social or psychological difficulty were better technologies—“information and communication technologies” (ICTs), as they came to be known.

The argument is foolish, to be sure. The very juxtaposition of information and communication in this way creates a conceptual fuzziness that is generally treated with benign neglect; at the same time, it is not without some subtlety. Human beings need to communicate with each other to solve many problems, and technologies can help facilitate human interaction; they can also facilitate access to information. However, this does not justify the claim that human beings cannot interact without ICTs—a caveat that marketeers conveniently overlooked to peddle their wares, both soft and hard.

An advertisement on CNN captures the sleight of hand rather nicely. In it, a father—obviously an important businessman who travels a lot—promises his little girl that he will call her while he is away. When he does, his daughter reacts with a rapturous “Daddy!” Sanctimonious, he responds, “A promise is a promise.” The lesson, obviously, is that family happiness is the result of ICTs—not that a happy family comes first, and may elect to use such technologies to overcome temporary separation.

Here is another example: Scholarly publishing has been completely transformed by the advent of computers and networks. Libraries used to purchase printed publications (academic journals, for example), store them and provide a local open-access space for their patrons. Nowadays, however, libraries negotiate licences that allow

electronic access to banks of articles, instead of owning the printed materials. As a result, libraries must limit access to “legitimate” patrons, such as members of a university community, and must deny access to others, such as local citizens, despite the fact that access licenses are often bought with public money. Any Martian observer would consider this evolution a loss, but scholarly and commercial publishers have found a way to justify it: technological progress improves desktop access for the scholars (which is true, hence the subtlety of the situation), but, they argue, this technological novelty is costly and requires new forms of intellectual property protection. Because they frame their argument in terms of technological imperatives (presented as opportunities), and not in terms of social fabric, they find themselves effectively speaking the information society language. Technological progress is substituted for social improvement. In other words, the “ease of access” hides the fact that the researcher gradually begins to behave like a privileged consumer, while the rest of the population

The information society hype was raised to new heights: all that humanity needed to overcome just about any social or psychological difficulty were better technologies.

is effectively disenfranchised. The language of technological progress is conflated with human progress and, in this fashion, it becomes a convenient marketing tool for ICTs.

How should one react to this? Confronting the information society

head-on is not a good solution: as any successful ideology, it includes positive elements—in our examples, they are the “Daddy” and “desktop convenience” effects. Indeed, ICTs can harbour positive results; however, they should be subservient to real human needs and to real human communication, rather than seen as a miracle solution to communication difficulties. Mobile telephones are not notable for their ability to decrease divorce rates, for example.

The very human ability to communicate comes first, and it testifies to the importance of the social environment for all of us: solitary confinement can make someone go mad or worse. Communication leads to the ability to do more, including interacting more efficiently through new technologies. The information society stands this observation on its head when it locates the solution to all human problems in technology. Communities always precede the technologies that they come to use. Scientists first formed specialized communities, and then devised appropriate means of communication. Computer programmers, by sharing code via the Internet, have also demonstrated the accuracy of this observation: the Internet did not create the Linux operating system; rather, Linux programmers found that they could build their communities of interest much more easily thanks to the Internet.

Together, these examples show the fundamental importance of prior associations, groups and communities; in effect, civil society breeds communication pools that reshape technologies in new ways to fulfil specific communication needs. In the end, it is not an information society made of objects and consumers that we want, but rather a dynamic, vibrant web of communities that communicate avidly and innovate, if only to

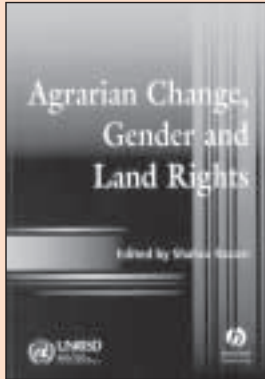
try and build a better life for all. From Linux to basic research, a single message emerges: the information society makes little or no sense

Confronting the information society head-on is not a good solution: as any successful ideology; it includes positive elements. However, ICTs should be subservient to real human needs and to real human communication, rather than seen as a miracle solution to communication difficulties.

if it is not first deeply rooted in a multifaceted civil society where life, that is, active communication, takes place.

Jean-Claude Guéron is a historian of science by training and a Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Montreal, Canada. He has spent the past 10 years studying the social and cultural effects of the Internet, as well as the evolution of scholarly publishing in a digitized and networked context.

REQUIRED READING: BOOKS



Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights

edited by Shahra Razavi

Contents § Introduction: Agrarian change, gender and land rights—*Shahra Razavi* § Global capitalism, deflation and agrarian crisis in developing countries—*Utsa Patnaik* § Policy discourses on women's land rights in sub-Saharan Africa: The implications of the re-turn to the customary—*Ann Whitehead and Dzodzi Tsikata* § Piety in the sky? Gender policy and land reform in South Africa—*Cherryl Walker* § Securing women's interests within land tenure reforms: Recent debates in Tanzania—*Dzodzi Tsikata* § Gender and land rights revisited: Exploring new prospects via the state, family and market—*Bina Agarwal* § The cry for land: Agrarian reform, gender and land rights in Uzbekistan—*Deniz Kandiyoti* § Women's land rights and rural social movements in the Brazilian agrarian reform—*Carmen Diana Deere*

Shahra Razavi is a Research Co-ordinator at UNRISD.

Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights is co-published with Blackwell Publishing; paperback, ISBN 1-4051-1076-7, 296 pages, 2003, £19.99/\$39.95. **Order from** Blackwell Publishing, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford OX4 2DQ, United Kingdom; www.blackwellpublishing.com.



Ayadi Mar'iyah: Tahamul Al-Mas'uliyah Min Ajl Al-Tanmiyah Al-Ijtimaiyah

Arabic translation of *Visible Hands: Taking Responsibility for Social Development*, UNRISD, 2000

Contents § Globalization with a human mask § Who pays? Financing social development § Fragile democracies § A new mission for the public sector § Calling corporations to account § Civil societies § Getting development right for women § Sustaining development

Editorial team This UNRISD report was prepared by *Peter Utting* (project co-ordinator), *Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara*, *Yusuf Bangura*, *Thandika Mkandawire*, *Shahra Razavi*, *Peter Utting* and *David Westendorff* (chapter co-ordinators); and *Peter Stalker* and *Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara* (principal editors). The Arabic translation from the English original was jointly financed by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

and UNRISD, and was carried out by the Arab Organization for Translation. *Mervat Tallawy*, UN Under-Secretary-General and ESCWA Executive Secretary, wrote the preface.

Ayadi Mar'iyah is co-published with ESCWA; paperback, 184 pages, 2002, contact publisher for price. **Order from** ESCWA, P.O. Box 11-8575, Riad el-Solh Square, Beirut, Lebanon.

Visible Hands was also published in French, Spanish and Russian in 2001; the Executive Summary was published in Portuguese in 2002; Chinese and Persian editions are forthcoming.



Communicating in the Information Society

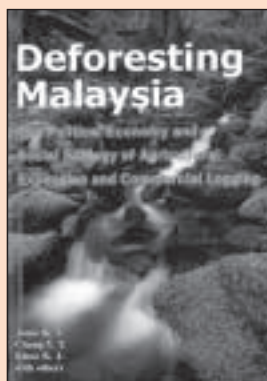
edited by Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochrú

Contents § Introduction—*Seán Ó Siochrú and Bruce Girard* § What about gender issues in the information society?—*Dafne Sabanes Plou* § A community informatics for the information society—*William McIver, Jr.* § The other information revolution: Media and empowerment in developing countries—*James Deane et al.* § Media and democratization in the information society—*Marc Raboy* § Human rights for the information society—*Cees Hamelink* § Locating the information society within civil society: The case of scientific and scholarly publications—*Jean-Claude Guédon* § A brief descriptive glossary of communication and information (Aimed at providing clarification and improving mutual understanding)—*Antonio Pasquali*

Bruce Girard is an independent media worker and researcher; **Seán Ó Siochrú** is co-founder and Director of Nexus Research in Dublin, Ireland.

Order from UNRISD; paperback, ISBN 92-9085-045-0, 223 pages, 2003, \$30.

REQUIRED READING: BOOKS



Deforesting Malaysia: The Political Economy and Social Ecology of Agricultural Expansion and Commercial Logging

Jomo K.S., Chang Y.T. and Khoo K.J., with others

Contents § Malaysia: An introduction § Agriculture and the forests § Peninsular Malaysia § Sabah § Sarawak § Markets, politics and logging § Conclusion

Jomo K.S. is Head of Development Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, and a member of the UNRISD Board; **Chang Y.T.** is an independent consultant and economist who has worked on environmental issues in Malaysia; **Khoo K.J.** is an independent writer and former academic in Malaysia.

Deforesting Malaysia is co-published with Zed Books; hardback, ISBN 1-84277-466-2, 304 pages, 2004, £50/\$75. **Order from** Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, United

Kingdom; phone 44 (0)20 7837 4014, fax 44 (0)20 7833 3960, sales@zedbooks.demon.co.uk.



Development at Risk: Rethinking UN-Business Partnerships

Ann Zammit

Contents § UN-business partnerships: What is at stake? § The nature of the development challenge § UN-business partnerships: An all purpose development tool? § The Global Compact § Corporate social responsibility: A systemic issue § Corporate social responsibility and developing countries § TNCs as partners in development: Fact or fiction? § Public-private partnerships: A holy alliance? § A new development strategy and true test of corporate responsibility

Ann Zammit is an independent consultant with UNRISD and other international organizations.

Development at Risk is co-published with the South Centre; paperback, ISBN 92-9162-020-8, 328 pages, 2003, free of charge. **Order from** UNRISD; or the South Centre, 17 chemin du Champ-d'Anier, P.O. Box 228, 1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland; phone 41 (0)22 791 8050,

fax 41 (0)22 798 8531, south@southcentre.org, www.southcentre.org.



Gender Justice, Development, and Rights

edited by Maxine Molyneux and Shahra Razavi

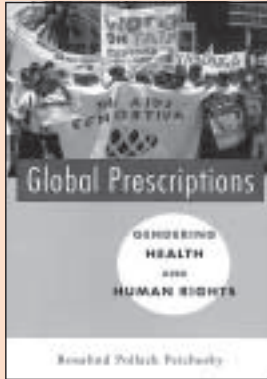
Contents § Introduction—*Maxine Molyneux and Shahra Razavi* § Women's capabilities and social justice—*Martha Nussbaum* § Gender justice, human rights, and neo-liberal economic policies—*Diane Elson* § Multiculturalism, universalism, and the claims of democracy—*Anne Phillips* § Political and social citizenship: The case of Poland—*Jacqueline Heinen and Stéphane Portet* § Engendering the new social citizenship in Chile: NGOs and social provisioning under neo-liberalism—*Verónica Schild* § Engendering education: Prospects for a rights-based approach to female education deprivation in India—*Ramya Subrahmanian* § Encounters between feminism, democracy and reformism in contemporary Iran—*Parvin Pajdar* § The "devil's deal": Women's political participation and authoritarianism in Peru—*Cecilia Blondet* § In and against the party: Women's representation and constituency-building in Uganda and South Africa—*Anne Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim* § The politics of gender, ethnicity, and democratization in Malaysia: Shifting interests and identities—*Maznah*

Mohamad § National law and indigenous customary law: The struggle for justice of indigenous women in Chiapas, Mexico—*R. Aída Hernández Castillo* § The politics of women's rights and cultural diversity in Uganda—*Aili Mari Tripp*

Maxine Molyneux is a Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London, United Kingdom; **Shahra Razavi** is a Research Co-ordinator at UNRISD.

Gender Justice, Development, and Rights is co-published with Oxford University Press; paperback, ISBN 0-19-925645-4, 504 pages, 2002, £18.99; hardback, ISBN 0-19-925644-6, 504 pages, 2002, £50. **Order from** Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, United Kingdom; www.oup.co.uk.

REQUIRED READING: BOOKS



Global Prescriptions: Gendering Health and Human Rights

Rosalind Pollack Petchesky

Contents § Transnationalizing women's health movements § The UN conferences as sites of discursive struggle: Gains and fault lines § HIV/AIDS and the human right to health: On a collision course with global capitalism § Managing health under global capitalism: Equity vs. productivity § Implementing international norms at the national level: Women's health NGOs on the firing line § Conclusion: Reflections on transnational feminist movements and global governance in an era of infinite war

Rosalind Pollack Petchesky is Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York, United States, and founder and past co-ordinator of the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRAG).

Global Prescriptions is co-published with Zed Books; paperback, ISBN 1-84277-007-1, 306 pages, 2003, £16.95/\$29.95; hardback, ISBN 1-84277-004-7, 306 pages, 2003, £49.95/\$75. **Order from** Zed Books, 7 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF, United Kingdom; phone 44 (0)20 7837 4014, fax 44 (0)20 7833 3960, sales@zedbooks.demon.co.uk.

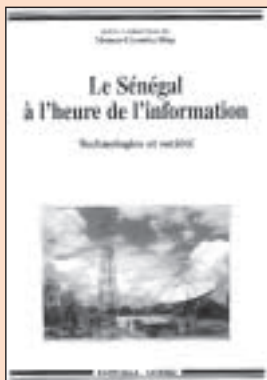


One Step Further: Responses to HIV/AIDS

Sida Studies No. 7

Contents § HIV and AIDS: From the perspective of human rights and legal protection—*Mark Heywood* § The dimensions and wider context of HIV/AIDS stigma and resulting discrimination in Southern Africa—*Virginia Bond* § The option of antiretroviral treatment in Africa—*Toke Barfod and Henrik Ullum* § HIV/AIDS and development: The Chikankata experience—*Weddy Silomba* § Understanding community responses to the situation of children affected by AIDS: Lessons for external agencies—*Geoff Foster* § AIDS and the private sector: Lessons from Southern Africa—*Alan Whiteside and Mary O'Grady* § Voices on *Femina Hip* magazine: Using "edutainment" to promote an open discussion about sexuality and risk behaviour—*Minou Fuglesang* § Morality and misfortune: Discourses around illhealth in a Zambian village—*Paul Dover* § HIV/AIDS: Is the worst yet to come? Data, spread patterns and trends—*Mikael Hammar skjöld* § To fight AIDS successfully requires unconventional approaches—*Bertil Egerö* § Afterword—HIV/AIDS: The way forward—*Joe Collins and Bill Rau*

One Step Further is co-published with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida); paperback, ISSN 1404-9562, ISBN 91-586-8781-5, 236 pages, December 2002, free of charge. **Order from** UNRISD; or Sida, SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden, phone 468 6985000, info@sida.se, www.sida.se.



Le Sénégal à l'heure de l'information

edited by Momar-Coumba Diop

Contents § Introduction: Technologies, pouvoirs et société—*Momar-Coumba Diop* § Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication: Défis et opportunités pour l'économie sénégalaise—*Gaye Daffé and Mamadou Dansokho* § L'impact d'Internet sur le fonctionnement des moyennes et grandes entreprises industrielles—*Philippe Barry and Hamidou Diop* § Les entreprises sénégalaises face aux nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication—*Abdoulaye Ndiaye* § Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication et les personnels des médias—*Abdou Latif Coulibaly* § Enjeux et rôle des NTIC dans les mutations urbaines: Le cas de Touba—*Cheikh Guèye* § Les émigrés sénégalais et les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication—*Serigne Mansour Tall* § Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et le processus démocratique—*Moussa Paye* § Radiodiffusion et nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication (NTIC): Usages, enjeux et perspectives—*Saidou Dia* § Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication et le système éducatif—*Serigne Mbacké Seck and Cheikh Guèye* § Technologies de l'information et de la communication et enseignement supérieur—*Abdourahmane Ndiaye*

Momar-Coumba Diop is a Researcher at the Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal.

Le Sénégal à l'heure de l'information is co-published with Editions Karthala; paperback, ISBN 2-84586-376-4, 390 pages, 2003, 28 euros. **Order from** Editions Karthala, 22-24 Boulevard Arago, 75013 Paris, France; phone 33 (0)143 311559, fax 33 (0)145 352705; karthala@wanadoo.fr.

REQUIRED READING: PAPERS

* Programme Paper on Civil Society and Social Movements

- PP CSSM 6 **The Agrarian Question, Access to Land, and Peasant Responses in Sub-Saharan Africa**, *Archie Mafeje*, May 2003

* Programme Papers on Democracy, Governance and Human Rights

- PP DGHR 8 **African Decentralization: Local Actors, Powers and Accountability**, *Jesse C. Ribot*, December 2002
- PP DGHR 9 **A Declining Technocratic Regime: Bureaucracy, Political Parties and Interest Groups in Japan, 1950–2000**, *Toshihiro Nakamura*, December 2002
- PP DGHR 10 **Gender Justice, Development and Rights**, *Maxine Molyneux and Shahra Razavi*, January 2003

* Programme Papers on Identities, Conflict and Cohesion

- PP ICC 1 **The Historical Construction of Race and Citizenship in the United States**, *George M. Fredrickson*, October 2003
- PP ICC 2 **Migrant Workers and Xenophobia in the Middle East**, *Ray Jureidini*, December 2003

* Programme Papers on Social Policy and Development

- PP SPD 13 **Reworking Apartheid Legacies: Global Competition, Gender and Social Wages in South Africa, 1980–2000**, *Gillian Hart*, December 2002
- PP SPD 14 **Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights: A Brazilian Case Study**, *Julia S. Guivant*, June 2003
- PP SPD 15 **Global Capitalism, Deflation and Agrarian Crisis in Developing Countries**, *Utsa Patnaik*, October 2003

* Programme Papers on Technology, Business and Society

- PP TBS 7 **Les émigrés sénégalais et les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication**, *Serigne Mansour Tall*, May 2003
- PP TBS 8 **Enjeux et rôle des nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication dans les mutations urbaines: Le cas de Toubá (Sénégal)**, *Cheikh Guèye*, May 2003
- PP TBS 9 **The Riddle of Distance Education: Promise, Problems and Applications for Development**, *Judith Adler Hellman*, June 2003

- PP TBS 10 **Technology and Transformation: Facilitating Knowledge Networks in Eastern Europe**, *Jonathan Bach and David Stark*, October 2003
- PP TBS 11 **The Political Economy of International Communications: Foundation for the Emerging Global Debate about Media Ownership and Regulation**, *Robert W. McChesney and Dan Schiller*, October 2003
- PP TBS 12 **Waking Up to Risk: Corporate Responses to HIV/AIDS in the Workplace**, *Jem Bendell*, October 2003

* Programme Papers on UNRISD Overarching Concerns

- PP UOC 1 **Toward Integrated and Sustainable Development?**, *Solon L. Barraclough*, February 2001
- PP UOC 2 **Needs, Rights and Social Development**, *Rodolfo Stavenhagen*, July 2003
- PP UOC 3 **Globalization, Liberalization and Equitable Development: Lessons from East Asia**, *Jomo K.S.*, July 2003

■ UNRISD Conference News

- CN 10 **Improving Knowledge on Social Development in International Organizations II**, *Report of the UNRISD Seminar*, Prangins, Switzerland, 29–30 May 2002
- CN 11 **Ageing, Development and Social Protection**, *Report of the UNRISD International Conference*, Madrid, Spain, 8–9 April 2002
- CN 12 **The Need to Rethink Development Economics**, *Report of the UNRISD Conference*, Cape Town, South Africa, 7–8 September 2001

- * \$8 each for readers in the North,
\$4 each for readers in the South
- Free of charge

HOW TO ORDER UNRISD PUBLICATIONS

To order co-publications: Please contact the publisher.

To order in-house publications: Please contact the UNRISD Reference Centre, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland; phone 41(0)22 9173020; fax 41(0)22 9170650; info@unrisd.org; www.unrisd.org.

Methods of payment for in-house publications: By US dollar cheque drawn on a US bank, or by bank transfer in US dollars or the equivalent in Swiss francs.

We cannot accept credit card payments.

Social Knowledge and International Policy Making: Exploring the Linkages

20–21 April 2004, Geneva

United Nations (UN) organizations are often asked whether their research on social development issues is useful for international policy making. Implicit in this question are concerns about the relevance, quality, dissemination and impact of research.

- Are researchers addressing issues and questions of relevance to policy makers?
- Do research findings reach policy makers and inform their decision making, both internationally and at the country level?
- Who conducts UN research? What are the interactions between research commissioned by international and bilateral agencies, and that carried out by researchers in developing countries? What are the impacts on the latter's research agendas?
- Is UN research sufficiently independent and critical?
- Can UN research add anything to that being undertaken within academic institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)?

Also implicit in this question is the assumption that knowledge and policy stand in direct relation to each other. To understand how research impacts policy, however, it is

necessary to examine how the relationship is mediated by politics, discourse, subjectivity and learning. It is also important to understand the implications of new institutional developments associated with networking, partnerships, "knowledge agencies", organizational learning, multi-stakeholder dialogues and other initiatives.

*To understand how
research impacts policy,
it is necessary to examine
how the relationship is
mediated by politics,
discourse, subjectivity
and learning.*

At this UNRISD conference, 32 speakers and panellists will address such issues. In their presentations, they will assess the intellectual contributions of UN research; its impact on policy making; and its relevance, co-ordination and dissemination. They will also consider the nature of relations between international development research and the academic and activist communities, particularly in developing countries; and the current and future status of independent and critical research within the UN system.

This UNRISD conference will also be part of an ongoing initiative that periodically brings together senior UN officials in a dialogue on key development issues (see box below). And it will provide an occasion to mark the fortieth anniversary of UNRISD with the dissemination of the report *Research for Social Change*, which reviews and synthesizes the findings from 40 years of UNRISD research.

Improving Knowledge on Social Development in International Organizations

As part of the UNRISD project on Improving Knowledge on Social Development in International Organizations, senior UN officials meet approximately every 18 months in order to (i) examine new knowledge related to key global issues of direct relevance to their work, and (ii) reflect on the construction of a coherent and progressive UN position on certain social development issues. The first two meetings of this group, held in 2000 and 2002, were attended by officials from the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), World Health Organization (WHO), and the UN regional commissions.

Research for Social Change UNRISD Fortieth Anniversary Report



Since the creation in 1963 of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the world has experienced profound changes through decolonization, urbanization, industrialization, democratization and globalization. Over this period, UNRISD has played an important role in mobilizing research capacity to assess and understand the economic, social, cultural and political causes and implications of these processes—in particular the question of why poverty and violent conflict continue to afflict so much of humanity.... The status of UNRISD, as an autonomous organization that can engage freely in independent thinking, allows it consistently to address sensitive issues, scrutinize mainstream policies and approaches to development, and propose innovative solutions. As such, it is a highly valuable asset to the United Nations family.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan
Foreword, Research for Social Change

This new UNRISD report is both commemorative and substantive: it traces the history of UNRISD research, examines the Institute's contributions to social development thinking and debates, and takes stock of what the research findings have revealed in relation to six main themes: social policy and well-being; social cohesion and conflict; sustainable development; democratization, civil society and governance; gender and development; and markets, business and regulation.

One chapter of the report takes an "institutional" rather than "issue-based" focus, highlighting elements of continuity and change in the Institute's research agenda, and illustrating some of the ways UNRISD interacts with the United Nations system and donors.

Research for Social Change UNRISD Fortieth Anniversary Report

1 – A Brief History of UNRISD Research

- Continuity...
- ...and Change
- Why do programmes end?
- Interacting with the United Nations and donors
- Looking to the future

2 – Social Policy and Well-Being

- The marginalization of social policy
- The social effects of adjustment
- Social welfare provisioning
- Toward a unified approach?

3 – Social Cohesion and Conflict

- Perceptions and problems of social integration
- Identities and conflict

4 – Sustainable Development

- Social and environmental connections
- Technical and institutional fixes
- Applying new approaches and concepts
- The question of power

5 – Democratization, Civil Society and Governance

- Participation and social movements
- Democratizing policy making

6 – Gender and Development

- Gender politics
- Gender justice and rights
- Gender and livelihoods

7 – Markets, Business and Regulation

- Planning and co-operatives
- Understanding markets
- Corporate social responsibility
- Co-regulation and accountability

This UNRISD report was prepared by Peter Utting (research co-ordinator and principal editor) and Jenifer Freedman (editor and production co-ordinator), based on contributions by Yusuf Bangura, Jenifer Freedman, K.B. Ghimire, Huck-ju Kwon, Shahra Razavi and Peter Utting. Désirée Abrahams, Véronique Martinez and Anita Tombez provided research, documentation and secretarial assistance.

Order from UNRISD; paperback, ISBN 92-9085-044-2, 127 pages, 2003, free of charge. The report is also available at www.unrisd.org.

French and Spanish editions of the report are forthcoming in spring 2004.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Development: Towards a New Agenda?

17–18 November 2003, Geneva

While transnational corporations (TNCs) increasingly acknowledge the need to improve their social, environmental and human rights records in developing countries, their voluntary initiatives in this direction have generated considerable criticism and prompted calls for alternative regulatory approaches. At this UNRISD conference, 23 speakers addressed an audience of 200 people on the following issues:

- the developmental impacts of corporate social responsibility (CSR);
- the potential and limits of public-private partnerships and non-governmental systems for regulating TNCs;
- the substance and significance of recent proposals, demands and campaigns for “corporate accountability”; and
- the appropriate role of the United Nations in international regulation of TNCs.

The discussions revealed that CSR discourse and some specific CSR initiatives have, indeed, taken off during the past decade. Presentations from researchers examining the scale and impact of CSR in developing countries, however, raised questions about the number of enterprises seriously engaged, the way CSR policies are imposed on developing countries in general and TNC suppliers in particular, and the extent to which key development issues are still largely ignored. Such issues include tax avoidance, transfer pricing, poverty reduction, unemployment, and the limited capacity of many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to raise standards and compete with TNCs.

New types of regulatory relations with TNCs, involving so-called multistakeholder initiatives or non-governmental systems of regulation, which set standards and promote company reporting, monitoring, auditing and certification, have attempted to address some of the limits of voluntary approaches to CSR. Conference participants generally saw them as constituting innovative forms of regulation adapted to the new realities of globalization and global democratic governance. Their future role, however, was uncertain given their cost and complexity, and their tendency to multiply, diverge and compete. Some participants called for a more coordinated approach, greater emphasis on complaints procedures and heightened sensitivity to the reality of SMEs in developing countries.

Recent demands and proposals promoting corporate accountability and legalistic approaches to regulation were seen by many conference participants as an important corrective to the emphasis of the past two decades on deregulation and voluntary initiatives. These new approaches also attempt to ensure that key issues to do with corporate power, privilege and duties assume centre stage. But the emerging corporate accountability movement faces considerable challenges—not least the need to build broad-based coalitions to mobilize support and overcome resistance.

Presentations by several United Nations (UN) officials and others highlighted the eclectic nature of the UN’s regulatory role vis-à-vis TNCs. The Global Compact generated considerable debate, with some participants seeing it as a useful forum for dialogue

and learning. Others, however, voiced concern that both the Compact and UN-business partnership initiatives had crowded out the consideration of more effective regulatory approaches, and done more to legitimize TNCs and facilitate their business activities in developing countries than to fundamentally improve their social and environmental performance. The recently drafted UN Norms on the Responsibilities of TNCs and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights were generally viewed in a positive light, but there was considerable uncertainty regarding their political future.

The conference discussions generated various proposals for regulatory reform, including the effective implementation of existing norms and instruments; using the procurement power of the UN to promote CSR; strengthening the monitoring and investigative role of UN bodies; and embarking on the longer-term task of developing a comprehensive global regulatory infrastructure to deal with not only labour, consumer and environmental protection, but also taxation and competition.

A report on the main debates and recommendations of this meeting will be published as an issue of UNRISD Conference News, and summaries of the presentations are available at www.unrisd.org.

Social Policy in Late Industrializers

Regional Components Hold Workshops in 2003

The UNRISD project on Social Policy in a Development Context explores a state-society nexus that is economically developmental, politically democratic and socially inclusive. The project comprises four thematic subprojects, and five region-centred subprojects. The latter are concerned with the historical trajectories of social policy in “late industrializers” in sub-Saharan Africa, the Nordic countries, the Middle East and North Africa, East Asia, and Latin America. During 2003, five regional workshops were held. At these workshops, which were also attended by representatives from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Ford Foundation, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), researchers presented the first drafts of their research reports, which were then discussed in order to strengthen their arguments within the overall methodological framework of the project.

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Challenge of Social Policy

The sub-Saharan Africa subproject workshop took place on 27–28 February 2003 at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. Escalating poverty, anaemic growth rates and reversals in social development indicators in many sub-Saharan African countries bear witness to the urgency of social policy in the region. Yet state capacity is severely constrained, due in part to structural adjustment programmes. Research under this region-centred subproject is exploring the social, political and economic forces that have promoted—and impeded—social policy adoption, specifically in the ar-

reas of education, health, water and sanitation. Human resource development and social security are also being studied. And because the distribution of policy outcomes is so skewed in most African countries that the most vulnerable sections of the population rarely benefit, distributional challenges are also tackled in this subproject. Research is being carried out in francophone West Africa (Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon and Senegal), anglophone West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda), and Southern Africa (Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe).

Social Policy and Economic Development in the Nordic Countries

The Nordic countries subproject workshop was held on 4–5 April 2003 at the Institute for Future Studies in Stockholm, Sweden. These countries offer an important example of simultaneous improvements in development, democracy and social inclusion. By and large, these welfare states have been of an inclusive nature, based on productivism, universal social investment and democratic governance. They managed to maintain an inclusive welfare state in the midst of post-Keynesian reform, and are now facing the challenges brought about by globalization, population ageing and declining fertility rates. These countries introduced social policies at a relatively early stage in relation to their economic development. This subproject examines the historical development patterns and policy outcomes of the Nordic welfare states in areas of social care, education, poverty and health. It also tackles the theoretical debates on the relationship between economic growth and social protection. The experiences of the Nordic countries may provide lessons that may be applicable for the developing countries in other

regions that are being studied under this project. This subproject covers Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark.

Social Policy and Economic Development in the Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) subproject team met on 19–20 June 2003 at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, United Kingdom. The subproject, which covers Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Morocco, Turkey and Tunisia, is pioneering comparative research on social policies in this region. Social policy has been strongly affected by the region’s oil-based economy, as well as its authoritarian political regimes and Islamic patriarchal structures. State social policies were relatively generous, but they benefited state sector employees, and lacked the democratic and developmental credentials found, for example, in the Nordic or East Asian countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Since the end of the 1990s, following structural adjustment, the MENA region’s social policy achievements have been disappointing. During the workshop, it was pointed out that there were significant variations among the countries in the region. Tunisia stands out in particular, in terms of high public expenditure and social expenditure. This was attributed to the fact that social policy had been used as a tool for political legitimacy and social control.

Transforming the Developmental Welfare State in East Asia

The East Asian subproject workshop took place on 30 June–1 July 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand. This subproject covers Northeast Asian countries and economies (Japan, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China), Southeast Asian countries and economies (Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore) and countries with less developed

social welfare systems (China and Thailand). Historically, social policy has been used as an instrument for economic development in East Asia, and countries and economies in the region have been referred to as developmental welfare states. Following the financial crisis of 1997–1998, however, a number of governments implemented economic and social reforms. Preliminary research findings from this subproject show that while the countries and economies studied tried to maintain the developmental credential of their welfare states following the economic crisis, they undertook different types of welfare reform. The Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China, for example, extended social rights in order to facilitate economic restructuring; Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia maintained the basic structure of the welfare state. Such varied responses stemmed not only from differences in economic strategy, but

also from diverse political dynamics. Politics in several countries became more pluralistic, allowing new interest groups to press more successfully for their welfare demands. Workshop participants also discussed the universalization of social policy and challenges regarding its financial sustainability.

Social Policy in Latin American Late Industrializers

The Latin America subproject workshop was held on 13–15 October 2003 at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile. Draft papers on Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay were presented. Although the challenges of social policy differ among the Latin American countries being studied, the researchers agreed that the continent had reached a critical juncture after decades of decline in social welfare. In the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, for

example, Brazil has an opportunity to combine economic growth and improvement of social welfare with a strong democratic mandate. In interesting contrast, Cuba is now faced with the double challenge of economic development (after losing the economic anchor of the Soviet bloc) and maintaining a relatively high level of social welfare. Workshop participants agreed that the state in Latin America had played a significant role in transforming society when it took active responsibility for economic development. This should be reinvigorated with more emphasis on social protection.

Research under the project on Social Policy in a Development Context is funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), Sida and UNRISD core funds. The East Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa subprojects also receive funding from the Ford Foundation.

UNRISD EVENTS IN 2003

JAN 30–31 Globalization and Culture, Geneva
26–28 Le défi social du développement—Joint Project Meeting with the Réseau Universitaire International de Genève (RUIG), Geneva and Lausanne

FEB 28–29 Social Policy in a Development Context—Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Component Workshop, Grahamstown

MAR 3–5 Social Policy in a Development Context—Commercialization of Health Care Thematic Component Workshop, Geneva
10–11 UNRISD Board Meeting, Geneva

APR 4–5 Social Policy in a Development Context—Nordic Countries Regional Component Workshop, Stockholm

JUNE 13–14 UNRISD Policy Report on Gender and Development—Advisory Group Meeting, Geneva
19–20 Social Policy in a Development Context—Middle East and North Africa Regional Component Workshop, London

JULY 30–1 Social Policy in a Development Context—East Asia Regional Component Workshop, Bangkok

SEPT 4–5 UN World Summits and Civil Society Engagement—Project Methodology Workshop, Rio de Janeiro
26–27 Understanding Informational Developments: Mapping a Future Research Agenda—Research Planning Workshop, Geneva

OCT 1–3 Social Policy in a Development Context—Gender and Social Policy Thematic Component Workshop, Geneva
13–15 Social Policy in a Development Context—Latin America Regional Component Workshop, Santiago

NOV 6–7 Politics and Political Economy of HIV/AIDS—Project Methodology Workshop, Geneva
17–18 Corporate Social Responsibility and Development: Towards a New Agenda? Public Conference, Geneva

DEC 4–5 Social Policy in a Development Context—Research Co-ordinators Meeting, Geneva
10 World Summit on the Information Society—UNRISD Book Launch, Geneva

UN World Summits and Civil Society Engagement

4–5 September 2003, Rio de Janeiro

This workshop brought together researchers from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe to discuss the theoretical and methodological frameworks and the research questions for a new UNRISD project on UN World Summits and Civil Society Engagement. The project, which got under way in mid-2003, assesses the impact of a range of United-Nations-sponsored events on civil society activism. Research is being carried out in three countries that hosted summits—Brazil, China and South Africa—and three that hosted summit preparatory meetings (or PrepComs)—Chile, Indonesia and Senegal. A number of thematic studies have also been commissioned under the project.

The methodological workshop was held to establish a common framework for research that would ensure consistency between the case studies while allowing for a diversity of national contexts. The discussions regarding theoretical and methodological issues concentrated on definitions of concepts, and achieving a balance between national and international levels of analysis.

Participants agreed on a definition that characterizes civil society as a political and ideological rather than “technical” concept: a complex and dynamic social arena, with individuals and groups organized in various forms of associations and networks in order to express their views and fulfil their interests. Civil society can thus comprise anything from a global advocacy movement down to a village self-help group. The structures and forms of civil society, the relations between civil society and the state, those within civil society, and even those between civil societies are constantly evolving and changing. Such a conceptualization of

civil society—as process oriented—is particularly apt for this project, which analyses the historical evolution and current shape of civil society in order to identify changes in civil society that may be traced to a particular UN-sponsored event.

Countries—Summits

Brazil

- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992

China

- Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995

South Africa

- World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 2001
- World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002

Countries—PrepComs

Chile

- World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance—Regional PrepCom for the Americas, 2002

Indonesia

- World Summit on Sustainable Development—PrepCom IV, 2002

Senegal

- Fourth World Conference on Women—Fifth African Regional Conference on Women, 1994

During the workshop, the researchers identified a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods that would be used, including surveys, interviews, case studies, and the extensive use of primary and secondary documentation. The following framework questions were identified at the workshop and are guiding the national-level research.

1. What was the impact of hosting the summit/PrepCom on the issue in the national context?
2. What was the impact of hosting the summit/PrepCom on the structure of relations in civil society?
 - Who does/does not participate and why?
 - Were new networks/alliances formed?
 - Have the forms of association changed?
 - What was the influence of donors?
 - Have civil society actions changed?
3. What was the impact of hosting the summit/PrepCom on civil society relations...
 - With the state/party apparatus?
 - Among civil society organizations/actors themselves?
 - With the public?
 - Between national and global civil society?
4. What was the impact on national political space?

Research under this project will take place through December 2004. Funding for this project is provided by the Ford Foundation and UNRISD core funds.

Ethnic Structure, Inequality and Governance of the Public Sector

This UNRISD project, which began in January 2002 and is now drawing to a close, examines the complex ways ethnic cleavages and inequalities influence public sector institutions. It focuses on issues of representation and cohesion in the constitution and management of the public sectors of multiethnic societies under formal democratic rule.

The research is organized around a typology that classifies countries according to their levels of ethnic polarization. This typology distinguishes five types of ethnic structures: first, those in which one ethnicity is overwhelmingly dominant (referred to as *unipolar*); second, those in which there are only two groups, or two roughly equal groups predominate in a multiethnic setting (*bipolar*); and third, those in which there are only three groups, or three large groups in a multiethnic setting (*tripolar*). The fourth and fifth types are relevant to cases in which the ethnic structure is fragmented: cases of fragmented multipolarity, or high levels of fragmentation; and cases of concentrated multipolarity, in which fragmentation gives a few large groups the potential to organize selective coalitions and thereby influence representation in the public sector.

Sixteen countries have been studied: Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, Ghana, Fiji, India, Kenya, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, and Trinidad and Tobago. The project's researchers have collected data on ethnic cleavages and inequalities in four public institutions: civil service, cabinet, parliament and party system. They have analysed whether the distribution of offices is ethnically balanced or uneven, exam-

ined perceptions about the distribution and rules governing it, and studied the role of voter preferences in constituting these institutions. The researchers have also looked at the effectiveness of institutions for managing diversity and inequality. The institutions studied range from electoral rules to governance arrangements for power sharing, decentralization and protection of minority rights. Redistributive policies and rules that seek to correct disproportionality have also been analysed.

*Redistributive or ethnically
sensitive policies are
important in all multiethnic
societies, regardless of
ethnic structure.*

An international conference, jointly sponsored with the United Nations Development Programme Latvia office and the Latvian Ministry for Integration, will be held in Riga from 25 to 27 March 2004 to discuss the research findings and their policy implications. Among these are the imprecise nature of the links between ethnic structure and inequality, because of the multiple factors and rules that determine selection into public institutions. Electoral rules, party systems and voter preferences strongly influence the constitution of cabinets and parliaments, whereas "representation" in the bureaucracy is largely determined by non-electoral factors. The latter may include ethnicity-based citizenship laws; colonial policies that favoured one group at the expense of others; rules of indigeneity that give preference to "sons of the

soil"; merit-based rules that produce unequal outcomes; patronage regimes that distort the recruitment process; and cleavage-sensitive policies that seek to correct historical disadvantages or ensure balance.

The studies suggest that ethnic structures per se do not automatically determine political behaviour. Polarization does not occur only in bipolar or tripolar settings. It can also occur even in fragmented multiethnic societies when there are high levels of inequality between groups; or when cleavages other than those based on ethnicity alone—race, religion or geography, for example—divide society into two or three groups.

When groups fragment, the chances for co-operation across ethnic lines are higher than when group preferences are ethnically homogeneous, irrespective of the ethnic structure. However, fragmentation that leads to cross-ethnic co-operation is more likely to occur in unipolar and multipolar settings than in bipolar and tripolar ones. The latter often require ethnically sensitive institutions that provide incentives to co-operate and avoid conflicts. Ethnically sensitive *institutions* may not be relevant in unipolar and fragmented multipolar settings. However, redistributive or ethnically sensitive *policies* are important in all multiethnic societies, regardless of ethnic structure.

Funding for this project is provided by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) and the Ford Foundation, in addition to UNRISD core funds.

New UNRISD Research on Commercialization, Privatization and Universal Access to Water

It is estimated that over one billion people across the world do not have access to safe, clean drinking water, although this is a basic human need. Reducing the number by half is one of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

Lack of access more often results from sociopolitical factors and institutions that constrain delivery, than from scarcity of water resources. Until the late 1980s, the supply of water in the vast majority of developing countries was entrusted to public companies. But the latter failed to make the infrastructural investments required to provide water services to all, and poorer regions, neighbourhoods and people were often neglected. Even areas that were connected to public water supplies suffered from unreliable service, an indication that maintenance was also insufficient.

By the early 1990s, reforms involving commercialization of water services—the application of principles of cost recovery and profit maximization—and private sector participation were being proposed as a way to increase investment in water delivery networks, improve access for all sectors of the population and reduce the burden of public services on government finances. In the water sector, one of the most common ways of bringing in the private sector is through concession agreements, via which the state, while retaining ownership, transfers the right of operating the water utility to a private company.

But the commercialization and privatization of water services are controversial. On one hand, there is strong opposition from large segments of society that question the treatment of water purely as a commodity, rather

than as a human right. On the other hand, water fee increases as a consequence of reforms are predictably unpopular, and users have voiced their concerns, sometimes violently, often bringing reforms to a halt. Moreover, increases in water fees tend to be regressive, hurting the poor more than other segments of society.

After nearly a decade of experimentation with commercialization and private sector participation in water systems around the world, the results are disappointing.

After nearly a decade of experimentation with commercialization and private sector participation in water systems around the world, the results are disappointing. For example, in recent months, Suez Lyonnaise des Eaux declared it was leaving the Aguas Argentinas concession supplying the greater Buenos Aires (Argentina) area, and the Mayniland consortium that supplied half the population of Manila (Philippines) ceased operations. In Pune (India), an urban environmental infrastructure project was cancelled during the tender process because the project lost political support. And there are cases where the process of privatization was stopped because of user dissatisfaction and civil unrest, for example, in Cochabamba (Bolivia) and Tucuman (Argentina). Such examples of popular opposition and the withdrawal of multinational companies from concession agreements in developing countries cast doubt on the sus-

tainability of a model based on the commercialization of services and privatization. In other words, although badly needed, reforms in the water sector are not yet having the desired effect of bringing universal and equitable access to services.

A new UNRISD project is set to explore a range of experiences of water service provision, focusing in particular on those actively involving the private sector. It will shed light on some of the real impediments that have prevented governments and the private sector from bringing clean water to the poor, as well as the role that regulation and regulatory institutions have been playing in the water sector. The project has two major objectives: to clarify the nature of the “efficiency and equity” trade-off that is apparently affecting the provision of water services in developing countries, and to identify the institutional constraints to achieving universal access to water.

Eight case studies—Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Finland, India, the Philippines, Senegal and South Africa—have been commissioned to illustrate different experiences of reform in the water sector. These studies will combine analysis based on new institutional economics, political economy and political ecology to help understand the broader structural and power relations within which institutions affecting access to water emerge and evolve, as well as the outcomes of reforms in the water sector in the countries studied.

Support for this project is provided by UNRISD core funds.

UNRISD Policy Report on Gender and Development: 10 Years after Beijing

In June 2000 at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Beijing+5, governments unanimously agreed to assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005. Although a world conference is not planned for this purpose, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will consider progress made in the implementation of the Platform for Action during its forty-ninth session in March 2005 in New York.

Creating an enabling environment for the substantiation of women's rights, along the lines specified in the Platform for Action, requires serious and sustained policy reforms, as well as an understanding of the forces and factors that constrain positive action. UNRISD is preparing a research-based policy report on gender and development, to be launched at the forty-ninth session of the CSW. This UNRISD report will shed light on some of the critical policy issues highlighted in the Platform for Action, providing a useful complement to the formal review and appraisal of implementation being undertaken for the CSW by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW).

The UNRISD report will examine the four broad areas outlined below.

1. The changing political economy of development

The report will take stock of what is known about the gender implications and impacts of different economic policy regimes and specific policy components, and, on that basis, will draw lessons for policy formulation. It will trace and explain the substantial changes in the nature of development policy, from a Keynesian-type managed approach to one focusing on

structural adjustment and then to a full-blown neoliberal approach, and will evaluate the results of changing policy regimes and development strategies from a gender perspective.

2. Livelihoods, entitlements and social policy

The report will provide an analysis of how and why the liberalization agenda has taken root in different regions and how its different elements have evolved since the early 1980s. To provide a grounded analysis of how liberalization policies shape people's well-being and security in gender-differentiated ways, it will focus on the changing nature of labour markets as well as men's and women's access to critical assets, welfare services (especially health, education and care), state transfers (pensions and family allowances) and remittances from migrants.

3. Governance, democratization and civil society

One of the distinct and positive features of the last two decades has been women's greater political visibility—as individuals and as a social group—in both formal political institutions and in civil society. The report will examine some of the complex issues raised with respect to women's political mobilization (and their capacity to politicize issues of concern to them), their representation in political institutions, and their effectiveness in triggering better responsiveness and accountability from decision makers at different levels.

4. Armed conflict, violence and social change

The report will reflect, from a gender perspective, on issues of violence and insecurity in the context of militarism and war. It will examine in particular

the extent to which women have been able to articulate and promote their interests in post-conflict processes of reconstruction, governance reform and justice, and how abuses of women's rights in the context of armed conflict have provided a platform for women's rights advocates and their allies to bring about international legal and institutional changes.

Publications and other outputs

Nearly 70 background papers are being commissioned for the report. All will be available on the UNRISD Web site (www.unrisd.org), and selected ones will be published as UNRISD Occasional Papers between mid-2004 and early 2005.

The English-language edition of the report will be launched in March 2005 in New York, and other language versions will be published subsequently. All editions will be widely disseminated using electronic and print media, and via series of international and regional conferences planned for 2005 and 2006.

The background papers will also be brought together in edited volumes, to be co-published by UNRISD and a commercial publisher.

This activity is being funded by the European Union, the government of Sweden (Sida/SAREC), the government of the Netherlands and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The input of the nine-member advisory group convened to ensure the quality of this work is gratefully acknowledged.

New UNRISD Research on HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is destroying the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the world. By 2000, nearly 58 million people had been infected with HIV, and 22 million had died of AIDS. Each day sees over 15,000 new HIV infections. The pandemic has shifted in many parts of the world from more than a decade of silent transmission of HIV, toward an AIDS pandemic with high levels of illness and mortality. Efforts to combat the disease have been oriented above all toward finding biomedical and behavioural solutions, which are no doubt of vital importance. Nevertheless, concern with the deeper socio-economic and political roots of the pandemic is growing.

The continuing spread of HIV/AIDS at the turn of the twenty-first century is a sign of maldevelopment—an indicator of the failure at both national and international levels to create more equitable and prosperous societies for all.

Clearly, the disease strikes hardest where poverty is extensive, gender inequality is pervasive and public services are weak. In fact, the continuing spread of HIV/AIDS at the turn of the twenty-first century is a sign of maldevelopment—an indicator of the failure at both national and international levels to create more equitable and prosperous societies for all.

UNRISD carried out preliminary research on the development aspects of

HIV/AIDS in 2000–2002, and at the end of 2003 the Institute launched two new projects to explore these aspects in greater depth.

Project on Politics and Political Economy of HIV/AIDS

Of the many social, economic and political factors that drive and determine responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, structures of national and international political economy are among the most significant. Various decision makers and stakeholders assess what they expect to gain or lose by speaking out and taking substantive action on HIV/AIDS issues. These political considerations and decisions have remained largely hidden in analyses of the pandemic, but many have long-term implications for more fully shaping effective responses to HIV/AIDS.

The new UNRISD project on Politics and Political Economy of HIV/AIDS will move beyond simplistic analyses of “national success stories” toward a better understanding of the combination of forces—political, corporate, religious, bureaucratic, and public advocacy—that influence HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment, and mitigation decisions and responses. Case studies are being commissioned in Brazil, India, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Project on Community Responses to HIV/AIDS

The shortage of systematic empirical evidence on individual, household, family, and social group responses to HIV and AIDS motivates the other new UNRISD project, Community Responses to HIV/AIDS. The persistence of the pandemic and its increasing incidence in less powerful and economically marginalized communities signal the need for a critical review of policy and practices relating to HIV/AIDS.

The project focuses on how social groups confront “risk environments”, particularly where there is a growing rate of HIV infection, and on the organization of social support for households and families in response to the impacts of AIDS. Research will explore

Various decision makers and stakeholders assess what they expect to gain or lose by speaking out and taking substantive action on HIV/AIDS issues.

these two areas with the goal of improving understanding of the processes, institutions and factors that bring households and families together in support networks; the influence of such networking in mobilizing resources and services to reach vulnerable households and families; the role that civil society and the state have played in these processes; and the impact of these practices on vulnerability to HIV and AIDS, particularly for more economically and socially marginalized groups.

Both research projects are funded by the Royal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway and UNRISD core funds, and are set to run through 2004.

Solon Barraclough 1922–2002

Solon Barraclough, Director of UNRISD from May 1977 to January 1984, died on 19 December 2002. Solon's academic training, practical work in the field, worldwide work experience and capacious interdisciplinary reading made him a particularly erudite leader and member of an institution such as UNRISD, dedicated to research on social development.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, as head of the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA) studies on land tenure and rural development, and the Institute for Training in Research in Agrarian Reform (ICIRA), in Santiago, Chile, he put together international teams of researchers to produce some of the most insightful and inspiring studies of landholding and related issues in Latin America.

Solon's work on land tenure issues and rural change played a crucial part in the land reform policies and movements that swept Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s, and again in the 1980s in Central America. It also provided the background to subsequent path-breaking work by UNRISD on the prospects for and implications of the so-called Green Revolution; the potential and limits of "popular participation"; food insecurity in developing countries; and the social dimensions of environmental change.

Solon had a huge intellect that spanned numerous disciplines, and he was a prolific writer on development issues. His books, which include *An End to Hunger?* (Zed Books, 1991), *Forests and Livelihoods* (Macmillan, 1995) and *The Quest for Sustainable Development* (UNRISD, forthcoming), are imbued with analysis and insights from economics, statistics, politics, sociology, history and the natural sciences, and

are backed up by his considerable practical experience of farming, forestry and development projects.

He was above all an astute critic, ceaselessly denouncing the ills of the world and poor analysis. An economist by training, in the tradition of colleagues like John Kenneth Galbraith, he had a healthy disrespect for much of what passes for brilliance in the profession of economics. For example, although he was an excellent mathematician, he preferred clear written exposition to reliance on mathematical annotation; and he could be scathing in his criticism of model building by researchers with a limited knowledge of the area with which they were ostensibly concerned. Furthermore, his long familiarity with the real world of statistics made it difficult for him to accept the validity of many learned studies uncritically based on "the available data", which he knew was likely to be of extremely dubious quality.

Solon was a great social scientist. He understood and treasured the intricacies of the human condition. In his search for ways to improve people's level of living and quality of life, he always tried to understand the way particular societies are organized: the patterns of social relations and institutions that shape present options and affect future ones. In this sense, like any good sociologist, anthropologist or political scientist working in development studies, he practised "institutional economics" long before economists discovered the field.

And he went far beyond the boundaries of that school in his thinking about development. Solon was a philosopher and historian. So, like the early political economists, he tried to understand the broader course of human progress. In this, he was unusually

able to escape the sway of any single ideology. Perhaps because he analysed each interpretation of history so carefully and knew world history so well, he had little patience with neat explanations of anything. He was a "structuralist" who understood the dynamics of the world capitalist system, but he always left room in his analysis for contingency and volition—for the kinds of developments that grow out of people's organization and commitment to change.

Solon wore multiple hats. He was a family man, married for many years to Fran, with whom he adopted four children in Chile, and later to Isabel, with whom he had two sons. He was also a farmer and a forester, tending his smallholding at his home in France and periodically managing a forest in his native New Hampshire. He was an activist who cared deeply, personally, about the prospects of humankind, and considered it his privilege and duty to work toward a better future. He was never afraid to speak the truth, never afraid to criticize injustice and propose radical solutions. This frequently got him into trouble with powerful elites. He was expelled from the "Deep South" in the United States in the 1950s when he tried to improve the working conditions of black plantation workers; forced to give up research and university teaching in Lebanon in the late 1950s when his survey data began to contradict official government statistics; obliged, in the 1970s, to relocate his technical assistance programme in Mexico to another ministry when he began to expose corruption; and, of course, forced to leave Chile at the time of the Pinochet coup.

Solon is missed by friends and colleagues around the world for his indefatigable quest for knowledge and

information, his identification with progressive social movements, and his challenging conversations. Many remember him for his fervent insistence that, without the backing of social forces, proposals for policy change, no matter how rational, are unlikely to make much advance.

This eulogy draws on commentaries by Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara, Peter Utting and Ann Zammit. Other tributes to the life and work of Solon Barraclough can be found at www.unrisd.org.

Salma Sobhan

It was with deep regret that UNRISD learned of the death of Salma Sobhan, in December 2003 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Ms. Sobhan had been nominated, in July 2003, to a four-year term on the UNRISD Board. She was a founder member of Ain O Salish Kendra, a legal resource centre based in Dhaka that provides aid and counselling to the powerless, particularly women and working children.

Failure and Success at WSIS

continued from page 24

on profits, the ever-lengthening duration of copyright and exceptionally powerful criminal laws to enforce it, the commercialization of knowledge creation, and a host of related issues.

Many among the thousands of NGOs converging on Geneva in December 2003 brought these issues to WSIS, arguing that it is impossible to truly debate an information society without considering who owns information, who controls its production and dissemination, and whose interests that information ultimately serves. Civil society demanded that these issues also be put on the table. When they were refused, they produced their own Civil Society Declaration, containing the beginnings of an alternative vision of an information society that truly puts people first, that holds that information and communication are inseparable, and that points to alternative ways of achieving this.²

Of course, it is somewhat unfair to criticize WSIS for not tackling these issues. Neither powerful governments nor the ITU ever intended it to address such broad concerns, no matter how genuine. Key changes to the ways knowl-

edge is accessed, to the diversity of the audiovisual sector or to cultural creativity, for example, are often wrought in the small print of World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements, World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionality, the arcane language of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), or endless technical meetings of the ITU. There exists no forum for all stakeholders to openly debate these issues, to fully explore their implications, to allow society as a whole into decisions that will deeply affect our future. Civil society had no choice but to bring the issues to WSIS—a fact appreciated by many sympathetic governments.

This side-door entry into WSIS raises the question of where this valuable debate can now reconvene. The second phase of WSIS is unlikely to offer an opportunity to rehearse the broader questions. But perhaps momentum built up at WSIS can be carried forward, on one hand, deeper into civil society thinking through, for example, the World Social Forum; and, on the other hand, toward different transnational governance forums and processes. Among others, the proposed

UNESCO convention on cultural diversity may offer a useful platform to collaborate with like-minded governments, while the ongoing WTO negotiations around audiovisual sectors may provide an opportunity to articulate alternatives to the market approach.

In the medium term, progress will depend largely on the capacity of civil society and others to develop credible, realistic alternatives to the current paradigms for building an information and communication society.

¹ International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *World Telecommunication Development Report: Reinventing Telecoms*, ITU, Geneva, 2002.

² www.geneva2003.org/wsindex_c01_1_02.htm.

Seán Ó Siochrá is a media and communication writer, activist and consultant, and is a spokesperson for CRIS (Communication Rights in the Information Society; see www.crisinfo.org). He was a member of the WSIS Civil Society Bureau and director of the World Forum on Communication Rights held at the same time as WSIS.

An extended version of this article is forthcoming, tentatively titled "Will the real WSIS please stand up? The historic encounter of the 'information society' and the 'communication society'", in *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, Vol. 66, Nos. 3/4, June/July 2004.

UNRISD in Cyberspace

Six UNRISD publications have been selected for inclusion in the GRC Exchange, a new Web site hosted by the Governance Resource Centre (GRC) of the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and compiled by leading international experts. The GRC Exchange provides a focal point for sharing ideas on governance. www.grc-exchange.org/about/index.html

Forced Migration Online, a comprehensive Web site that provides access to a diverse range of information resources on forced migration, now includes 14 UNRISD publications on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons. www.forcedmigration.org

UNRISD in the Media

In an article titled “Who controls global media?”, the 1917-established weekly *West Africa* (No. 4352, 18–24 November 2002) comments at length on *Global Media Governance: A Beginner's Guide*, edited by Seán Ó Siochrú and Bruce Girard with Amy Mahan. The book was published in 2002 by UNRISD and Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. www.rowmanlittlefield.com

The Black Scholar (Vol. 32, Nos. 3–4, Fall/Winter 2002) reprinted the UNRISD Conference News on *Racism and*

Public Policy (Report of the UNRISD International Conference, Durban, South Africa, 3–5 September 2001).

Under the title “Distance education: An unquestionably positive step forward”, *UN Chronicle* (No. 4, 2003) carries an article based on *The Riddle of Distance Education: Promise, Problems and Applications for Development* by Judith Adler-Hellman (PP TBS 9).

UNRISD in Translation

Sage Publications has released a Japanese-language edition of Gøsta Esping-Andersen's *Welfare States in Transition: National Adaptations in Global Economies*, first published by UNRISD and Sage in English in 1996.

UNRISD and Training

UNRISD welcomes requests from educational institutions to use its publications in course packs, CD-ROMs and other teaching tools. UNRISD encourages universities that have used its publications in their courses to inform the Institute in order to enhance feedback and help keep statistics up to date.

Permissions have recently been granted to the University of Victoria and the University of Windsor, in Canada; the University of Lille, in France;

the Institute of Social Studies, in the Netherlands; the University of Oslo, in Norway; the University of the Philippines; the University of Pretoria, in South Africa; the University of Geneva, in Switzerland; the National Institute for Strategic Studies, in Ukraine; Oxford University, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the University of Sussex, in the United Kingdom; and New York University, Princeton University, Tennessee State University, Tufts University, the University of California at San Francisco, the University of Cincinnati and the University of Nebraska at Omaha, in the United States.

UNRISD Staff Outreach

Yusuf Bangura

— wrote “The political and cultural dynamics of the Sierra Leone war”, in Ibrahim Abdullah (ed.), *Between Democracy and Terror: The Sierra Leone Civil War*, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), 2004.

— was a panellist on the subject “Frontiers in the study of the politics of development”, at a conference organized by the Politics of Development Group, Department of Political Science, Stockholm University, Sweden.

Nicolas Bovay

— represented UNRISD at the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India in January 2004.

K.B. Ghimire

- acted as a resource person for the degree programme on Globalization, Social Regulation and Sustainable Development in the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Geneva, Switzerland.
- is a member of the international advisory board of *The Geographical Journal*.

Huck-ju Kwon

- gave a lecture on “Transforming the developmental welfare state in East Asia” to graduate students in the Department of Government and Public Policy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- is regional (East Asia) editor of the journal *Global Social Policy*.

Thandika Mkandawire

- wrote “Institutions and development in Africa” and presented it at the conference on Economics for the Future, organized by the *Cambridge Journal of Economics* in Cambridge, United Kingdom.
- wrote “The political economy of the postcolonial, developmental state”, in Simon Bromley et al. (eds.), *Making the International: Economic Interdependence and Political Order*, Pluto Press, London, 2004.

Shahra Razavi

- guest-edited a special issue of the *Journal of Agrarian Change* on Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights (Vol. 3, Nos. 1 and 2, January–April 2003).
- prepared a background paper, “Women’s changing roles

in the context of reform and globalization”, for UNESCO’s *Education for All—Global Monitoring Report 2003/4*.

Cecilia Ugaz

- wrote “Approaches to service delivery: Privatization, decentralization and equity” and presented it at the seminar on New Approaches to Decentralized Service Delivery, organized by the Ford Foundation in Santiago, Chile.
- was a lead speaker on regulatory challenges related to privatization of infrastructure services involving foreign direct investment (FDI), at the Expert Meeting on FDI and Development, organized by UNCTAD in Geneva, Switzerland.

Peter Utting

- wrote “The Global Compact: Why all the fuss?”, in the *UN Chronicle* (No. 1, 2003).
- wrote “Corporate responsibility and labour issues in China: Reflections on a Beijing conference”, in *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* (Issue 10, Summer 2003).



UNRISD is an autonomous agency engaging in multidisciplinary research on the social dimensions of contemporary development problems. Its work is guided by the conviction that, for effective development policies to be formulated, an understanding of the social and political context is crucial. The Institute attempts to provide governments, development agencies, grassroots organizations and scholars with a better understanding of how development policies and processes of economic, social and environmental change affect different social groups. Working through an extensive network of national research centres, UNRISD aims to promote original research as well as strengthen research capacity in developing countries.

UNRISD gratefully acknowledges the support for its activities provided by its core funders: Denmark, Finland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

UNRISD
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland
info@unrisd.org
www.unrisd.org

Editor: Jenifer Freedman
Associate Editor: Suroor Alikhan
Production: Pamela Smaridge

Opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the author(s). Publication does not constitute endorsement by UNRISD.



Printed on recycled paper.

Failure and Success at WSIS

Seán Ó Siochrú

The negotiations at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December 2003 produced mixed results. On the downside, a mutually convenient alliance of powerful governments blocked action to tackle the erosion of civil and human rights in electronic space; the United States watered down support for development-friendly, free, and open-source software; and community-driven approaches to building access to and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) got barely a mention. But other areas might, in time, yield modestly positive results: the call to reroute huge volumes of Southern Internet traffic internally instead of via the United States; the idea of an open archive for scientific research; and the development of regional strategies for the information society.

What is difficult to explain is the failure of wealthy governments to act decisively on the primary motivation for the summit—the fear that the “digital divide” is reinforcing educational, income and health divides instead of alleviating them. No new mechanisms were designed to close these gaps; and a decision on the Digital Solidarity Fund demanded by poorer countries was postponed (rather than rejected outright) only in order to prevent a collapse of the summit. A fuller explanation emerges when WSIS is viewed in its historical context, as the intersection of two global debates—about the “information society” and the “communication society”—that for several decades have unfolded in parallel, seldom intersecting. WSIS witnessed the dying moments of one, but the other raises hope for the future.

The “official” debate on the information society (then called the “post-industrial society”) dates to the early 1970s. Then, academics demonstrated that information workers had become the largest block of workers in wealthy countries, that an “intellectual technology” infrastructure was emerging alongside industrial infrastructure, and that increasing numbers of goods were, in fact, “packaged information”. These insights pre-dated the explosion in ICTs and offered several different strategic models for taking full advantage of the trend, from state-led investment to market-led approaches. This is interesting for two reasons. First, it gives the lie to “technology determinists” who argue that technological innovation drove what later became known as the information society, pointing to a more complex process in which the growing role of information provoked the revolution in technology. Second and more importantly, however, it reminds us that there are more ways to build an information society than the purely market-driven one; indeed, it reminds us that there are many

conceivable information societies, and that the way we choose to construct them will leave a deep imprint on the kinds that result.

Only in the mid-1990s did the information society agenda narrow to its current form, with the use of the term by the European Union to launch its efforts to compete with the Global Information Infrastructure of the United States. In the political drive to privatize and liberalize, the corporate sector was to be the main actor, with governments merely playing a facilitating role. WSIS uncritically adopted this vision, and because of its inherent limitations WSIS lacked the inspiration and the innovation it needed to achieve its goals.

Indeed, this model has reached its limits. In 2002, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) reported that the growth rate in new telephone lines (still the basic means for people to access the information society) had for the first time “plunged”, and that, with half the world’s telecom operators in private hands, most of the “easy” privatizations had already occurred.¹ Moreover, there is growing evidence that, with pent-up demand among the middle classes and commercial entities largely satisfied, the market on its own is incapable of delivering services to the mass of people with less income. A narrow profit-driven agenda and the absence of effective universal-service policies leave the majority of poorer people with little prospect of joining this information society. WSIS failed to set up, let alone finance, the Digital Solidarity Fund mainly because of the refusal of powerful governments to deviate from the prescribed model that has served their corporations so well, and to consider alternative paradigms for development.

All may not be lost, however, because this information society agenda was met in Geneva by another, broader, agenda.

Also in the 1970s, the world for the first time debated the role of communication in society, embracing such matters as media governance, freedom of expression and human rights, spectrum and satellite use, journalism ethics and news, and cultural diversity. For a decade, the halls of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) resounded with the heated arguments of governments trapped in Cold War rhetoric, in the end achieving little. But concerns raised by this compromised effort did not disappear. In the two decades since, many in civil society have grown worried about the concentration of media ownership and its focus ▶ *page 21*