

# Communication and Globalization - A Challenge for Public Policy

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## Introduction

Amid the confusion and chaos surrounding the abortive World Trade Organization negotiations in Seattle in late 1999, U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky was widely quoted as stating "The single greatest threat to the multilateral trade system is the absence of public support" [*Financial Times* 1999]. In Canada, the absence of public support for the WTO project was palpable. The House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, in a report released the previous June, had revealed that Canadians wanted the protection of cultural identity and cultural diversity to be priority issues in Seattle [Canada 1999].

This was consistent with Canada's historic attempt to use communication policy to negotiate the tension between commerce and culture. But that position was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Also in June 1999, for example, the country's long-brewing dispute with the United States over access for U.S. magazines to the Canadian advertising market came to a head as Canada agreed to change several pieces of legislation in exchange for which the U.S. abandoned procedures it had begun under the existing WTO accord [Canadian Heritage 1999b].

The magazine dispute was just one, albeit highly mediated, illustration of the new constraints imposed on national sovereignty by the emerging global economy. These constraints are beginning to reveal problems that various social actors have been trying to address. The Canadian government, for one, has consistently maintained the legitimacy of pursuing non-economic goals through public policy *notwithstanding* its adherence to the international trade regime developing under the auspices of new governance structure such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the WTO. But the nature of this new regime - in which Canada is an active participant and which Canadian negotiators have very much helped to shape - does not easily allow for the pursuit of social and cultural goals. This begs the question: **how can public policy be meaningfully developed in a context marked by a shift in decisionmaking from the national to the transnational or global level?**

As this is being written, a *de facto* policy environment for global communication is taking shape<sup>1</sup>. Right now, this environment is evolving according to its own logic, requirements, protocols and rules, while various players try to influence it as best they can. But **the extension of the sphere of communication policy to the global level has both limitations and possibilities, as national debates on communication policy issues are not only constrained but also enhanced by global policy developments**. Globalization, therefore, should be viewed as a policy *challenge* rather than simply a justification for "the end of policy" arguments presented as natural wisdom in neoliberal, deregulationist discourse.

### 1. Why Communication?

The mass media, cultural industries and communication and information technologies have become the major catalysts for cultural activity, mass consumption and participation in public life. They are also increasingly the basis for direct communication across vast distances and without respect to time. Consequently, **access to the resources that facilitate communication can be seen as part of the basic building blocks of citizenship** and raises policy issues that are central to the development of civil society.

Communication and information technologies, while of little interest in themselves, are strategically critical in efforts to intervene economically on the one hand, and in the cultural sphere on the other. **The stakes of communication policy revolve around struggles over who gets to use these technologies, under what conditions, in order to promote which projects, and in whose interests.** Conceptually, "communication" is another way of describing the technological space at the interface of economic globalization and cultural globalization. This paper looks at the policy implications of what is going on in that space.

Communication has always been linked to democratic struggles, and is increasingly relevant to thinking about broader issues such as the role of the state and human rights [Raboy 1998, 1999]. Today, because of the particular situation of communication in the overall environment of globalization, communication policy issues have an important impact on a range of related questions<sup>2</sup>. The global policy framework for communication is therefore emerging as a key structural component of the emerging global governance framework in general.

In trying to get a grasp on this, we need to delink explanations of the mechanics of globalization from the ideology of neoliberalism. Even if it is true that we are moving towards a global society, this does not mean that there is no longer a need for law and regulation. The neoliberal approach to global governance is a political choice, not a logical one, and the development of economic or market globalization does not in itself negate the need for rules. Indeed, the pragmatic neoliberal approach recognizes this and is constantly searching for new regulatory mechanisms appropriate to advancing its political project and the interests that project represents. In terms of democratic politics, on the other hand, we need to begin thinking about what one might mean by **'global public policy'** [Reinicke 1998], and of ways to capture and define a **global public interest**.

For example, what kind of transnational mechanisms need to be put in place in order to allow local (national) authorities to regulate public resources in the public interest? in order to meet historical policy objectives which have evolved until now largely at the national level? to resolve cultural differences in a context of economic inequality and unequal development?<sup>3</sup> These questions now need to be addressed in a transnational framework, where global policy can be developed based on global norms, and national policy would be based on principles designed to allow for the local expression of particular social and cultural values<sup>4</sup>.

A key feature of globalization is the systematic integration of private transnational industry into decisionmaking processes, alongside the exclusion of civil society forces from the arenas where decisions are made. In this sense, the new global governance system is *undoing* the democratization

features put in place in various spheres of activity in countries such as Canada, where there is at least transparency, nominal participation, and a possibility of making gains<sup>5</sup>. While more and more actors are beginning to use the term **global civil society**, very few have considered the policy requirements for ensuring that communication contributes to the development of the democratic system of global governance that they have in mind. In trying to imagine these requirements, we can take some inspiration from the experience of historical national efforts to orient communication towards public interest goals.

As a point of departure, I am in agreement with Robin Higham that communication and cultural policy issues constitute an area of "horizontal policy overlays, an all-policies policy. These are objectives to be accommodated in the same manner that we now accommodate environmental issues, human rights and justice in decision-making by governments and civil society" [Higham 1998: 8].

Higham goes on to state: "The trade policy/culture quarrel is probably where the contest between Canada's economic and human development priorities is most visible to the public" [Higham 1998: 9]. This visibility takes on a certain importance for our project as well, insofar as any state intervention intending to reverse the trends of globalization will require widespread mobilization of political constituencies<sup>6</sup>. **On the world scale, the contradiction between culture and commerce is emerging as one of the fundamental cleavages of the 21st century, as a leitmotif of globalization.** In Canada, we are particularly well situated to deal with this contradiction. On the one hand, we have recognized its importance since very early in our history so we are sensitive to its symptoms and have built up a considerable expertise in dealing with the problems that result from it.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Canada has, more than most, a stake in the outcome of the issues. In many respects, the issue is survival - not 'as a nation', but rather as however each of us defines his or her distinctiveness. Communication policy issues are directly tied to the politics of identity, and are, in this sense, tied to concerns about social cohesion as well.

Communication policy must also address a whole set of issues related to **cultural development**. In a 1993 study [Raboy et al 1994a]<sup>8</sup>, a research team including the author of this paper defined cultural development as **the process by which human beings acquire the individual and collective resources necessary to participate in public life**. In thinking this through, we noted that "the key to dealing with the challenges of cultural development in the new global context lay in rethinking the role of the state and public policy" [Raboy et al 1994b]. At the time, only a few years ago, it was still a novel idea to suggest that it was necessary to examine how a country like Canada could continue to use national policy to influence the sphere of culture and communication in the context of globalization. But the terrain was already shifting, and rather dramatically.

In 1993, we observed that traditional cultural practices, mass-mediated communication, and other spheres of activity such as education had become intertwined, **"through networks of communication and information resources which are also fundamental to the conduct of global commerce"** [op. cit.]. This trend has continued and grown in importance in the intervening years. It is therefore important to understand the development of this trend, from its historical roots in the emergence of an international governance regime in information and communication

technology in the 19th century, through the establishment of multilateral institutions for regulating international relations in communication, to the launching of a range of global projects which are defining the parameters of the new global environment in communication.

But since national governments are still key players in this new environment, it is also crucial to understand the rise and decline of national policy intervention in communication - an area in which Canada provides one of the most interesting historical examples. The Canadian experience enables us to consider the current possibilities for "blending" policy approaches across the national and transnational spheres, as we map the current and immediately foreseeable terrain in global communication policy.

This paper will therefore briefly sketch the historical background to the emergence of a global communication policy framework, in Canada and internationally. But first, some preliminary observations are necessary.

## 2. A Communication Perspective On Globalization<sup>9</sup>

As a semantic notion, "globalization" is not new. From the perspective of the European elites of the early sixteenth century, the term could well have described the outward push of the frontiers they had grown up with and the new consciousness of the contours of their world. The native populations of the western hemisphere may have chosen a different term to describe the process that began in 1492, but the consciousness leap they would have undergone invites a parallel. In theoretical terms, "globalization" can be seen as referring to a process whereby the introduction of external elements changes the context in which a given collectivity has hitherto evolved.

Beyond this notion of an extended horizon, "globalization" also refers to processes of integration. The period of colonialism and the growth of mercantile capitalism it spawned added new links to the embryonic global economy born of the trade in silk and spices and beyond. This economy was made possible by early technologies of communication, and developed successively with every major new technological advance. From the slogan "The sun never sets on the British Empire", to the notion of World War, to the concept of the "global village", the idea of a shrinking and increasingly interconnected world has a long history in western culture.

So what is new about "globalization" as we now use the term? There is no shortage of anecdotal evidence to illustrate the sense that there **is** something new that the term is being used to describe.<sup>10</sup> As I see it, the term "globalization" is being used to describe the following salient characteristics of the world in which we are living. Each of these characteristics raises a set of particular issues with respect to communication and, more specifically relevant to this paper, communication policy.

### *The diminishing sovereignty of national states*

The emergence of the international system of nation-states, and the system of international relations based on relations between states, was a main characteristic of an earlier phase of

globalization, marked by the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. For roughly 300 years from that date, national sovereignty was on the rise, and world politics was characterized by the conflicts and disputes between sovereign states, between allied groups of sovereign states, or between imperial states and their colonies. For the past 50 years, however, the Westphalia system has been undermined by a number of factors, including the emergence of the United Nations system of multilateral institutions based, in theory, on the equal participation of sovereign states, and the parallel emergence of more than 100 new postcolonial states. The national state remains the principal mode of political organization and representation for both domestic and international purposes, but it is increasingly required to share its sovereignty with other actors. One of the main challenges of late 20th century "globalization" is therefore the need to rethink and actualize our conception of sovereignty, as well as the role of the state.

Where they once made policy autonomously in the full range of areas of public concern, national states now negotiate on behalf of their constituencies in various fora where transnational policy issues are discussed and decided. With respect to communication, this raises questions about regulation, public funding, the appropriate balance between public and commercial service, access, freedom of expression, the pertinence of harnessing harmful content, and so on. Similar lists could be made for any sector of activity. But what distinguishes the issue of communication policy with respect to others, is that communication policy is a major determinant of the context in which other sectors (such as health care, education, and job training) will develop in the current phase of globalization. Communication infrastructures are the foundation for other activities, and these are increasingly elusive for national policymakers. The extent to which the Internet remains openly accessible and relatively noncommercial, for example, is an issue that can only be decided by transnational agreement. The marketplace will seek its own solutions independent of the public interest, and national governments can not act individually to address this. On the other hand, communication policy has become one of the main battlegrounds for national efforts to claw back lost bits of sovereignty on cultural grounds.

#### *The increasing integration of the world economy*

Again, this process dates, historically, from ancient times. The present situation is, however, unprecedented in both speed and extent. It is a source of both unprecedented stability and instability. On the one hand, one can now purchase an apparently unique copy of a seventeenth century Murano glass vase in places like Paris, Tokyo or Montreal for roughly the same price. On the other hand, dozens of venerable domestic industries such as shoe production are no longer viable in most parts of the world. Entire regions are excluded from participation in this increasingly global economy (as in an earlier era new social classes were created as a result of the emergence of industrial production). Consistent with the diminishing role of the national state, the global economy is characterized by the enhanced role of transnational corporations and the transnational concentration of corporate economic power. This leads to its own paradoxes. For example, contrary to popular myth, only three of the seven leading global cultural industry corporations are actually owned by "Americans"; more significantly, all of them have their main operational headquarters in a twenty-block area of central Manhattan [The Economist 1998<sup>11</sup>]. In political terms, economic integration represents an important shift because, unlike the state, democratic politics has no grapplehold on the corporate sector.

Global economic integration comes packed with a particularly seductive ideology that emerges powerfully in the sphere of culture and communication. The global cultural industries market not only a set of products but also a vision of a certain way of life. Thrust on to the global stage, all industrialized cultural production is reduced to entertainment and its only value is commercial. National cultural policies, public service media, and community and alternative forms of communication have no place in this framework - except as "exceptions" to the rules of commerce. Under NAFTA, for example, Canada is allowed to protect its cultural industries, but only at the expense of US retaliation in other trade sectors. There are some important embryonic alternatives worth mention, however. In 1997, the European Union adopted a measure recognizing the rights of member states to continue funding public service broadcast media, notwithstanding the impact that such funding could have on the competitive advantage of private sector media. The EU justification for this measure was that the importance of public broadcasting as an instrument of democracy outweighed the economic rights of the private broadcasting corporations. Contrary to the NAFTA exemption, this was the first case in communication where the policy logic of a national state was successfully transferred to a transnational governing body charged with developing a new regime of transnational economic integration, without provision for retaliation [CEU 1997].

*The technologically-based shrinking of time and space*

New technologies of communication have strongly marked every successive phase of globalization. In the present phase, however, new technologies such as the Internet give the impression of actually making time and space disappear. Major financial transactions take place instantaneously at the touch of a computer key and independently of distance. Stockbrokers in Hong Kong and hairdressers in Miami play bridge together in real time. In terms of the characteristics we have previously mentioned, communication technologies have contributed to undermining the unbridled power of national states and to the integration of the global economy. But they have also empowered new social actors, to the extent that these actors are able to claim and enjoy access to the technologies. On the periphery of the new ideology of the information society there is emerging a new conception of civil society. Issues surrounding the development and use of communication technologies are therefore - as they have always been - at the centre of contemporary social and political struggles. Where earlier struggles focussed on issues such as freedom of expression vis à vis the authoritarian state, and later, public versus private enterprise, today's struggles add to these new issues characteristic of the contemporary phase of globalization. The Internet, for example, raises issues concerning national sovereignty and economic power as well as freedom of expression and access to the means of communication. On the one hand, a certain conventional wisdom states that the new communication technologies like the Internet are ungovernable; on the other hand, high-powered global players ranging from the Microsoft Corporation to the European Union are seeking to put in place a global regulatory regime for governing the use and future development of the Internet.

As is well known, the new communication and information technologies bring with them an unprecedented explosion of channels of communication. They do not, however, provide content to fill those channels. Who gets to use the channels and how, with what content, is therefore a major area of conflict. The marketplace is structuring the new communication environment on a pay-as-

you-go basis, and the high end is essentially inaccessible to most people. This is creating a new democratic deficit and provides a flaw in the otherwise powerful ideology of the information society: the communication explosion does one no good if one can not afford to take advantage of it. At the same time, the market in information empowers the already powerful and excludes the rest, creating an ever-widening chasm between information rich and poor. New technologies notwithstanding, cultural flow continues to be skewed from centre to periphery, north to south. Information and cultural products still travel mainly one-way only between Atlanta and Ouagadougou. At the same time, it is increasingly difficult for anyone, or any country, to withdraw from the global culture. This has both positive and negative implications. On the one hand, authoritarian states no longer enjoy monopolies of knowledge by simply controlling national communication media or what enters their national territory. On the other hand, this raises the stakes of the debate on cultural universalism, best captured in Benjamin Barber's celebrated dichotomy "Jihad vs McWorld" [Barber 1995].

#### *The passing of received ideas about identity*

The contradictions of globalization with respect to the politics of cultural and identity questions are most striking in the area of communication. On the one hand, globalization creates a single world cultural environment in which everyone has access to the same messages, produced and disseminated through a tightly controlled, centralized network of networks. On the other hand - indeed, in response or resistance to this - globalization encourages a quest for individuality, distinctiveness and assertion of difference. The weakening of the "national" as the primary reference category for identity is mirrored by the strengthening of categories that cut across national boundaries, such as religion, ethnicity, language, gender, social class and sexual orientation. This has led to increasing debate around new conceptions of citizenship, particularly as the current phase of globalization is marked by the emergence of new cultural "hybridizations", diasporic communities and a delinking of cultural issues from geographical territories. Some, like U.S. State Department intellectual Samuel Huntington [1996], see in this the seeds of a geopolitical "clash of civilizations."

The political phenomena of "nations without states", and non-national forms of identification pose a special problem with respect to new forms of governance. Not surprisingly, this emerges first in the cultural sphere. Recognizing very clearly the fine line between nationhood and sovereignty, entities such as Quebec and Catalonia demand representation in UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization), rather than the United Nations, because UNESCO is dealing with cultural diversity issues while the UN deals with issues that can only be binding on national states (in theory at least!). However, it is going to become increasingly difficult to distinguish between the two, as politics and culture become intertwined. This will create new pressure on national states as well as multilateral bodies. The one-time congruency between national media and national states also becomes problematic in this context. New transnational media are emerging to fit the contours of the new constituencies that they seek to address, and traditional national media are among the first institutions to suffer from the blurring of national frontiers.

#### *The emergence of new locally-based global networks*

Perhaps the most striking contradiction of globalization as we know it is that all of the above phenomena have given rise to an unprecedented capacity for networking among ordinary individuals and groups in civil society who have not traditionally travelled or communicated internationally. In just about every area of social life, people are now connected. Some of these connections have given rise to influential transnational self-help, action research and lobby groups. The international mobilization against the Multilateral Agreement on Investments made possible by the Internet was one dramatic case that serves to highlight the thousands of lesser examples that could be brought to bear on this. The issue now is sustainability: can social networks survive strictly on the basis of technological links and in the absence of economic or political ties? And will the facilitating technologies remain accessible to them? Meanwhile, the new transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) constitute one of the three poles of the new global governance framework that is emerging at the political level (along with national states and transnational corporations).

In this context, "the right to communicate" has become a metaphor for both what is possible and what is problematic with respect to globalization. Some are even arguing that international problems in communication will be the successor to the environment as the focal point of both global concern and grassroots activism. Again, the paradox we noted previously comes into play here: communication becomes both the object and the means of political struggle. The new global networks in communication are thus constituted around groups of practitioners in community radio, video, and computer communication; but they are focussing increasingly on global policy issues, as they come to recognize the link between the politics that determine the nature of the global public sphere and the activities they try to undertake in order to participate in it. Globally networked community media activists thus constitute an important link in the practices and policy debates that are redefining communication [see, for example, Videazimut 1998].

#### *The establishment of a new framework for global governance*

Regional groupings of states, the multilateral system, international agreements... the number and scope of sites of global deliberation and rule-making are multiplying at a ferocious pace. With the decline in national sovereignty, the shift from the national to the transnational as the principal location of governance is the final and possibly most encompassing aspect of the present phase of globalization. This obliges us to think historically about the ways in which governance regimes were used in different phases of human history and particularly in moments of fundamental change. It is sophistry to pretend that globalization means the end of political intervention in favour of a collective social project. It is rather the nature of the collectivity that needs to be rethought, and new mechanisms invented. Globalization facilitates this process, by foregrounding the alternatives to the traditional state and the market, and making available the technological means for new modes of social organization. The new culture of communication fostered by globalization is also a positive factor here.

Political and economic arrangements involving various groups of states, such as NAFTA, the European Union and the G7 create new transnational regulatory regimes for governing a range of activities, including communication. These groupings each operate differently, each according to

its own raison d'être. With NAFTA, the emphasis is on trade relations. Europe seeks to develop a regionally-integrated economy operating under a common set of rules. Thus, the EU's "Television Without Frontiers" directive seeks to protect the European audiovisual space for European cultural enterprise; it does not protect the individual member states from one another. The G7, meanwhile, operates more as a clearing-house for projects in the common interest of the world's economically most powerful nations. It is therefore not surprising that the G7 is sponsoring the U.S.-initiated "Global Information Infrastructure" project to create a single, seamless worldwide communication system (see below).

At the global level, the multilateral system is becoming the site of discussion and debate on communication policy issues. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights provides a focus for issues regarding the right to communicate; the UN must also deal regularly with media-related problems in the context of its conflict resolution and human development efforts. More concrete work takes place in a range of specialized agencies such as the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and UNESCO. Here, again, national states constitute the deliberative and decisional basis but, increasingly, corporate and NGO participants are becoming involved. The much-awaited reform of these multilateral agencies heralds the new system of global governance. Meanwhile, international treaties discussed under the aegis of these organizations are becoming the legislative building blocks of the new system. This is the case especially of the World Trade Organization, whose 1997 agreement on telecommunications opened the telecom markets of some 90 countries to foreign investment. In this respect, the interesting thing about the Multilateral Agreement on Investments is that it was being negotiated within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), a far more exclusive organization grouping the world's 30-or-so richest countries.

In short, the emergence of a global governance system raises some tantalizing questions about the possibilities for future policy intervention at the global level. We shall consider some of these later, in the final section of this paper.

### 3. Communication Policy in the Canadian Context<sup>12</sup>

Every country in the world today faces a similar set of issues with respect to information and communication. The responses they seek vary from one context to another, according to an array of political, economic, sociological, cultural and historical circumstances. But the issues are the same. So if we want to look at the policy challenges of globalization for Canada in a communication perspective, we have to look at the context in which communication policy is made - in this country, elsewhere and globally.

Historically, public debate over communication policy has been one of the dominant themes of Canadian social discourse since the early days of radio broadcasting. Communication, in Canada, has been seen as a binding force for national unity, as a vehicle for social development and as an instrument of cultural affirmation. In contradiction with these overriding themes, policy has also sought to promote the economic development of Canadian communication industries. In this respect, more so than in Europe or the United States, where one or the other pole has conventionally

dominated, communication in Canada has evolved according to the push and pull of the tension between economics and culture.

To illustrate, consider the following important moment in Canadian communication history. The year was 1932, and the government had just introduced legislation after a three year hiatus following the report of Sir John Aird's Royal Commission on Radio Broadcasting. One of the key players at the parliamentary committee hearing on the Radio Broadcasting Act was the Canadian Radio League, one of the most extraordinary public interest pressure groups in the country's history, a vast coalition crossing linguistic, class and regional lines. The League had campaigned vigorously for Parliament to enact legislation along the lines of the Aird Report, and at the hearings, its chief spokesman, Graham Spry reiterated the view that radio had to be viewed as a public issue:

"The position of the Canadian Radio League is that so powerful and useful an agency of communication should be used for the broadest national purposes, that it should be owned and operated by the people, that it should not primarily be adapted to narrow advertising and propagandist purposes by irresponsible companies subject to no proper regulation or control". [cited in Raboy 1990: 39]

Canada needed a policy, a program, for broadcast development, Spry argued. The Aird Report had provided a framework for such a program, proposing creation of a full scale publicly owned broadcasting system. Spry and the CRL supported that proposal, but with a sense of urgency.

The urgency was brought about by an upcoming international convention on radio, scheduled for Madrid in September 1932, where radio frequencies were to be allocated to the participating nations, to be redistributed by their national governments according to whatever national policies each one would put in place. Canada's national interest was at stake, the Radio League argued; the big U.S. commercial groups, such as RCA, considered Canada part of their domestic territory; what would happen to Canada, Spry asked, "wedged as she is between a fiercely competitive group of European nations and a dominant American group? Without a program, without a policy, how can Canada claim her share of the air?" [op. cit.]

Canada had a choice, and the choice was clear, he told the parliamentary committee: "It is a choice between commercial interests and the people's interests. It is a choice between the State and the United States" [op. cit.: 40].

This argument has driven communication policy in Canada since the turn of the century. Canada's communication policy has always been tied to defining, protecting and promoting a national interest vis-a-vis both internal and external pressures of fragmentation, and always, as the example I just gave illustrates, in a context of globalization<sup>13</sup>. For Canada, seeking to distinguish itself from the United States has always been not so much a reflex of withdrawal but part of an attempt towards openness to the rest of the world on its own terms.

#### *Public service versus the market*

A quick historical overview of Canadian efforts to make policy in communication and

culture, highlights the contradictions of globalization as they have appeared from the very beginning of Canadian state intervention in this sphere. Canada adopted a Wireless Telegraph Act in 1905, only two years after the first international conference on the regulation of wireless radio-telegraphy took place in Berlin. This was followed by the Radiotelegraph Act of 1913. The Canadian state's entry into the sphere of radio broadcasting was slowed down by a jurisdictional dispute with several provinces, notably Quebec, who claimed the legal competence to intervene in this area.

The early development of Canadian broadcasting was strongly influenced by the two dominant models of the day, the US commercial model and the British public service model. Typically, broadcasting in Canada developed as a compromise between the two. But Canada was aggressive and innovative with respect to the protection and promotion of Canadian content - at least on paper, if less so in implementation. Canadian content quotas in radio, and television, efforts to gain control of feature film screen distribution, foreign ownership regulations, and various subsidy programs combined with a strong emphasis on public cultural institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Film Board, kept Canada on the global cultural map, so to speak.

A new Canadian strategy for the deployment of public funds and policy towards industrial development rather than the public sector emerged in the 1980s. Typical was the 1983 creation of Telefilm Canada, which essentially diverted funds previously allocated to the CBC to a new independent production sector aimed not only at the domestic, but increasingly at international markets. The cable industry was anointed as the favoured vehicle for Canadianization in broadcasting, and a plethora of Canadian pay tv and specialty services were licensed with that in mind. Since the 1980s, nationalist rhetoric notwithstanding, Canada's cultural policy has aimed at giving Canadian cultural industries competitive advantage in the global marketplace. This has made Canada a willing partner in the global trend towards market liberalization, deregulation and corporate concentration - to the perplexed irritation of US trade negotiators who see the cultural industries "exemption" in the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (carried over into NAFTA) as a not-so-subtle protectionism that has nothing to do with culture.

This overview also highlights the fact that policy is the result of the interplay of particular *interests*, represented in the organizations of the political structure (the state, political parties, bureaucracies etc), the economy (private and public sectors and their related institutions) and civil society (organized and unorganized groups and individuals who intervene in the policy process).

Contemporary Canadian communication policy debates have settled firmly into this mould. We have seen this interplay of interests in a stream of recent documents, procedures, formal and ad hoc policy development initiatives<sup>14</sup>, lobbying and public relations campaigns; as well as high-state pronouncements, ministerial declarations, representations at the G7 and the WTO, through NAFTA, etc. We have seen the various interests at work played out within Canada, in bilateral relations between Canada and others on the world stage, and at the geopolitical level where Canada (mainly its elites but also its citizens) participates in concert with the world's most powerful, dominant forces to design - and profit from - the new global communication environment.

But this should not obscure the fact that in the course of establishing a tradition of policy

intervention *for sociocultural objectives* in culture and communication, Canada has built a set of important institutional practices for policymaking in this area. Among these are the principle that communication infrastructures constitute a cornerstone of national cultural heritage, that the main instrument for realizing cultural and communication policy is a mixed system of publicly owned and publicly regulated public and private industries, and that the participation of social groups is a central part of the policymaking process. In this respect, Canada provides a model for *process* in communication policy-making that is emulated in many parts of the world.

*A "new" debate?*

As in other countries, a range of Canadian interests are concerned by recent developments in communication, particularly the development of the new information infrastructure and the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunication technologies. But is there anything really new with the way the debate on these issues is being framed? In a fundamental sense, it goes back to the 1960s and the creation of the federal Department of Communications, the launching of a domestic satellite program and the decision to develop policy in the field of communications with an eye toward both cultural and economic concerns. National development and industrial development were to be the two poles of Canadian communications policy after 1969. The cornerstone of Canadian cultural policy was to be the broadcasting system, organized as a mixed public-private sector model and closely regulated by an independent agency, the CRTC, to ensure both a strong Canadian presence on radio and television and the development of strong domestic production and distribution industries. At the same time, communication policy aimed to develop communications infrastructure, mainly through the use of satellites - in some respects exporting the problem of national development north of the 49th parallel to the more comfortable reaches of outer space.

In February 1969, speaking in the House of Commons debate on the legislation creating the Department of Communication, the minister-designate, Eric Kierans, said, in the popular jargon of the day, that the new department would be concerned "with the medium, not with the message" [cited in Raboy 1990: 193]. That has to a great extent held true to this day, but as every regulator knows, the two functions - media and messages, hardware and software, carriage and content, technology and culture - are interrelated and interdependent.

All these activities would be linked in a *national communications policy*, Kierans said: just as Confederation had been built on the "mile upon mile of steel rails laid across this country", Confederation would be renewed "by a communications system that meets the needs of all Canadians" [op. cit.]. There was a distinctly determinist thrust to Kierans' vision, and we now know that things are not quite like that... but we are still waiting for the policy.<sup>15</sup>

Fast forward to 1993, and the shutting down of the DOC. The dismantling of the Department of Communication and the bundling of its activities into the new Department of Canadian Heritage and the revamped and expanded Department of Industry signalled the end of a 25-year process of attempts at national consolidation through communication policy-making. Older narratives of Canada as an information society would now be rewritten. After decades of organizational difficulties, ministerial skirmishes and low political priority, the Canadian "information highway" project was initiated only in the face of an American and global kick-start,

demonstrating that the motor force behind the 1990s version of the information society was, as in the United States, "business and business demand". When the kick-start finally came, it was in a new political context where communication policy, telecommunications and infrastructure decisions would now be developed from inside the Industry portfolio, while the soft areas of cultural development, such as broadcasting, would be assigned to the domain of Heritage, whose main responsibility was the promotion of national unity and social cohesion [see Raboy 1996, Abramson & Raboy 1999].

This was the context in which the current Liberal government took office in 1993. Picking up the lead of the US vice-president Al Gore's [1994] call for progressive nations everywhere to help build a Global Information Infrastructure, the Liberals' 1994 Speech from the Throne announced the government's commitment to pursuing and developing a Canadian information highway. In the ensuing debate, a new notion of the *public interest* in communication would emerge.

#### *On access*

In Canada as elsewhere, the idea of the public interest operates as a legitimation of both state intervention and corporate affairs. A vague and polysemic term, the public interest is defined quite differently in different frameworks, and always depending on who is in control of the definition. In Canada's conventional broadcasting and telecommunications policies, the public interest has been conceptualized around two distinct models of communication and, more specifically, around two separate conceptions of public *access*. In the broadcasting model, emphasis is placed on the active receiver, on free choice, and access refers to the entire range of products on offer. In the telecommunications model, emphasis is on the sender, on the capacity to get one's messages out, and access refers to the means of communication. The information highway proposes to converge these models and to work towards an eventual single framework for communicative action, combining the broadcasting and telecommunications models by incorporating each one's conception of the public interest. The policies that are currently being put in place will determine the shape and texture of a new hybrid model of communication, which will have to combine the social and cultural, as well as economic, objectives of both broadcasting and telecommunications.

This should remind us that, beyond the existing operational models for both broadcasting and telecommunications, lies an even more fundamental issue regarding access in Canadian communication policy: the issue of access to the policy-making process itself. If the role of policy is to intervene in the way that society is organized, then access to policy intervention is one way in which citizens become able to act upon the institutional and organizational arrangements that structure their everyday lives. It is a fundamental building-block of democracy. In Canada, this principle has been an important part of communication policy-making since the time of the Aird Commission; and public hearings are still a legally required prerequisite to most CRTC procedures, providing an important channel of access to policy-making for those who do not enjoy the privileged positions of power leveraged by corporate and industrial lobbies [see Raboy 1995a and b]. But in fact, the erosion of effective public consultation has been one of the most striking aspects of the current phase of globalization. This takes on dramatic proportions when one considers it in the context of the emerging global policy framework, where world citizens have no direct access

whatsoever to the mechanics of policymaking. Paradoxically, the new communication technologies could facilitate and enable democratic participation in policy-making on an unprecedented scale, *if the political will to organize it were there*. In a perspective of thinking about democratic global governance mechanisms, communication policy thus becomes a major site of political struggle.

#### 4. The Global Politics of Communication Policy<sup>16</sup>

On the time-scale of human history, one can speak of communication in global terms for only a relatively short period; on the other hand, in terms of the common understanding of globalization as a very recent phenomenon, one sees traces of an evolving global communication policy over a period of more than one hundred years, and many of the early issues are still with us today.

A global arena for communication policy was launched in Paris, in 1863, at a conference convened to lay the foundation of an international postal system. For the next 130 years, international relations in communication were largely focussed on managing the environment in which communication resources would be used at the national level, according to the goals and capacities of individual nation-states and, minimally, on relations across state borders. From the harmonization of technical standards to the development of a common rate-accounting system, to the allocation of radio frequencies and later geostationary satellite positions, the underlying assumption was that communication was a national affair requiring a minimum of international coordination.

The world's first permanent intergovernmental organization, the International Telegraph Union, was set up in 1865 to provide a framework for development of international telegraph and telegram services.<sup>17</sup> This was followed in 1875 by the Treaty of Berne, which created the General Postal Union, and an international convention on copyright (also in Berne) in 1886. The turn of the 20th century saw the emergence of new communication technologies enabling direct point-to-point and point-to-mass sound communication. Radio presented a whole new range of issues that required international agreement. A first international conference on the regulation of wireless radio-telegraphy took place in Berlin in 1903, but it was only in 1927 that the Washington Radio Conference drafted a set of international regulations on radio communication. This was followed by a second conference in Madrid in 1932, at which the convergence of telegraph and radio technologies was recognized in the broadening and renaming of the ITU, now (and to this day) known as the International Telecommunications Union.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Dividing the world*

The Washington and Madrid conferences divided the world into a series of regions and attributed a particular set of radio frequencies to each one. A series of regional conferences then distributed the frequencies among sovereign states within the region, and each state authority was responsible for overseeing the use of those frequencies. Consequently, various national broadcasting models emerged in different parts of the world during the 1930s, but a basic pattern was established which remains in effect to this day: initial distribution of communication resources and

establishment of minimal mechanisms for coordination at the global level; sovereignty over the conditions of use of those resources at the national level. Without exception, national authorities everywhere set up some type of system for regulating the use of the airwaves on the territory under their jurisdiction.

A new era in international communication came into being in the immediate post-war period. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights underscored the right to freedom of information. UNESCO, created in 1946, began a series of activities which have been crucial to developing an understanding of the links between communication and culture and their importance for human development. New regional bodies like the Council of Europe have included communication in their sphere of concern, through periodic reference to specific themes and issues.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, communication and cultural issues began to crop up in the wake of the new economic multilateralism that flowed from the Bretton Woods agreements and creation of institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The first General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in 1947 was the setting for a vigorous debate that culminated in the acceptance of foreign film import quotas, notwithstanding the GATT's general thrust towards liberalization of national markets. The extent to which cultural "products" constitute a specific type of commodity requiring its own set of international trade rules has been a constant feature of multilateral and regional trade negotiations since that time.

#### *Towards a New World Order*

The question of national sovereignty over communication took on a new colour in the political and technological context of the 1960s and 1970s, with the emergence of dozens of new postcolonial states and the development of satellite technologies making it possible to transmit sound and images irrespective of national borders. The unequal flow of information content from north to south and the increasing importance of technological resources led, conceptually, to the articulation of a "cultural imperialism" thesis and, politically, to efforts to create a "New World Information and Communication Order" [see Tomlinson 1991; Galtung & Vincent 1993]. These issues were highlighted by publication, in 1980, of the report of a UNESCO commission chaired by Irish jurist and human rights activist Sean MacBride [UNESCO 1980] and the subsequent withdrawal from UNESCO of the United States, United Kingdom and Singapore. Meanwhile, with far less fanfare, an ITU report of the same period documented the unequal distribution of technical resources for communication worldwide [ITU 1984].<sup>20</sup>

UNESCO has since adopted a more low-key communication strategy, emphasizing the training of communication professionals and development of media institutions in the "transitional" states of central Europe, Africa and Asia [see UNESCO 1989]. In 1995, however, a UN/UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development published a major report which brought many of the lingering issues back on the table, with an updated analysis [UN/UNESCO 1995]. One of the concrete upshots of this report was the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development held in Stockholm in 1998 [see UNESCO 1998].

Meanwhile, the collapse of the Berlin Wall provided the possibility for extending the development of a global communication system under the hegemony of the western alliance. Cultural goods and services have been increasingly integrated to the international trade agreements of the 1990s, despite the resistance of a small number of countries - of which Canada is in the forefront. Under the auspices of the WTO, an open global market in telecommunications is emerging - paradoxically, one in which, through a spate of mergers, there are fewer and fewer players.<sup>21</sup> Foreign ownership and content regulations are increasingly under attack and threatened with extinction in the blueprints for the future such as the MAI. New issues are emerging which will only be able to be dealt with at the global level.

### *An imperial project*

The world had its first real glimpse of the communication politics of the global village at a February 1995 meeting of information ministers of the G7 group of nations in Brussels. Largely written in Washington, the plan to establish a "Global Information Infrastructure" adopted by the G7 at that meeting represented an imperial triumph of unprecedented scope, enshrining a single vision, program and policy framework for the role of communication technology as a means of achieving an idealized global society driven by the market forces of transnational capital. The irony of a so-called global project originating from a private meeting of the world's most powerful nations has been lost on most observers, as was the fact that, in Brussels, for the first time, non-government corporate representatives were granted official status at a G7 meeting.

First presented by US Vice-President Albert Gore at a meeting of the International Telecommunications Union in Buenos Aires in 1994, the GII project emanated from the Clinton administration's 1993 *Agenda for Action*, launching an initiative to build a new national information infrastructure (NII) which it defined as "the aggregate of the nation's networks, computers, software, information resources, developers and producers" [cited in Kahin 1995: 3; see also USG 1994, USIA 1995]. The NII has been the object of vigorous debate in the United States, over the contradictions between the development of its public interest and commercial vocations [see Drake 1995; Aufderheide 1999]. But bumped up to the global level, it was presented as an apparently unproblematic plan for establishing an information- and communication-based utopia.

As outlined by the US, the GII project traversed a continuum connecting public purpose and private enterprise by mobilizing such concepts as free trade, industrial development, modernization and technological progress. After Buenos Aires, US strategy called for bringing its partners in the alliance of advanced capitalist countries aboard under US leadership. Having proposed and achieved the calling of a G7 ministers' meeting in Brussels, the US concentrated on gaining support for the five basic principles announced in the GII plan - private investment, competition, flexible regulation, open access, and universal service - and identifying "policy actions" likely to advance these principles.

In Brussels, a more complex political dynamic set in, reflecting the range of important specific interests of different G7 members. The need to achieve favorable positioning for their own national representatives at the table of international capital, as well as to reflect key aspects of national policy (and thus speak to domestic public opinion) required negotiation of a modified

programme. The US version of the GII's original five points was thus expanded with the addition of references to equal access, content diversity, and international cooperation. The new 8-point GII indicated a greater attentiveness to potentially explosive issues such as perceived threats to cultural and linguistic diversity, social justice, and the gap between richer and poorer nations [see G7 1995].

The mediating role played by Canadian interventions here was noteworthy, as officials from the departments of Heritage and Industry presented the opposing views characteristic of Canadian communication policy. Thus, while Heritage Minister Michel Dupuy added Canada's voice to the European G7 members' insistence on including the principles of equal access, cultural diversity and international cooperation to the agenda of the GII, Industry Minister John Manley was busy reminding the assembly of the aggressive pro-market stance that Canada would be bringing to its information highway policy. This split was emblematic of Canadian policy-making's historic ambiguity in dealing with commerce and culture, straddling American and European policy approaches, as well as of the contradictions inherent in Canada's century-long effort to meld them.

In terms of global governance, the Brussels meeting represented a major shift: for the first time under the auspices of the G7, corporate enterprises met around their own separate table, with official status<sup>22</sup>. Groups representing civil society, meanwhile, were relegated to the margins of unofficial intervention - more reminiscent of the masses gathered outside the city gates in medieval Europe, than of the social partners that could be imagined by a naive reading of the text of the GII project.<sup>23</sup>

The framework arrived at in Brussels, in other words, was inscribed directly within the trajectory of U.S. communication policy over the past fifty years, whose rhetoric has moved from emphasizing the free flow of information to free trade in goods and services. Indeed, in every respect, the Global Information Infrastructure is a harbinger of both a certain emerging global regulatory system in communication and a future system of world governance. It is an imperial project with enormous implications for the future of democracy and human rights, insofar as it is based on political decisionmaking at a level where there is no accountability, the recognized autonomy of private capital, and the formal exclusion of the institutions of civil society. In terms of international relations, it extends the dependency of the so-called less-developed parts of the world. As a social project, it locates human development as a potential benefit of economic investment, rather than as the principal goal. As a challenge, it presents a tremendous opportunity to imagine a different role for communication in global society, and to organize politically to create and sustain a framework in which such an alternative can be achieved.

#### 5. Policy implications and recommendations:

##### Towards a global public space

As we have seen throughout this paper, Canada is playing an important yet ambivalent role in the evolution of a new global system of governance, as it tries to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of globalization. Canada's role is important because it is trying at least minimally to articulate and defend some alternative values to those of the marketplace. It is ambivalent, however, because the interests Canada is promoting on the front lines appear to be

primarily those of Canadian industries<sup>24</sup>. This basic contradiction indicates that **there is a need to place the social and cultural dimensions of communication more clearly in the foreground of global policy development**. Otherwise, attempts to promote cultural policy goals will be too easily revealed as no more than economic protectionism couched in nationalist rhetoric.

Multilateralism is clearly one of the central trends in global governance; but different players have different stakes and, consequently, need different strategies for intervening in a political system based on multilateral relations. According to Sylvia Ostry (1999), Canada was an active player in the coalition of middle-range powers that pushed the proposal to create the WTO during the GATT Uruguay Round in 1993-94. Ostry points out that mid-size countries like Canada favour a rules-based system for international governance, combining international rules and domestic sovereignty, rather than a system based on economic or military power<sup>25</sup>. The rules can then provide a basis for preserving and enhancing internal sovereignty. Large powers have a different stake in a multilateral system. Their first preference would be to rely on sheer power to assert their dominance directly vis a vis their partners.

But even large powers are recognizing the need for global coordination and regulation in order to create the state of order necessary for the flourishing of their interests. Thus, for example, the European Union and US have each been floating proposals for some kind of formal regulatory framework to govern global communication<sup>26</sup>. The crunch occurs when it comes time to determine the nature of that framework - as we saw illustrated through the case of the Global Information Infrastructure project. From a democratic perspective, no agenda for action on the global regulation of communication will be worth implementing unless the process can be broadened to include the participation of civil society in the new regulatory framework and the structures it creates. This is perhaps the most important challenge to the new regulatory environment: **opening up spaces for the participation of civil society**. Such spaces do not yet exist.

It will be crucial to keep this in mind as Canada continues to struggle against the situation created under the regime of the WTO, which is incompatible with Canada's historic consensus-based position of protecting cultural development from the whims of the marketplace<sup>27</sup>. In this light, it is important to mention the role Canada has been playing in calling for **"a new international instrument"** to offset the impact of the WTO-based regime in the area of cultural policy. This proposal emanated from a committee set up under the auspices of Foreign Affairs and International Trade [SAGIT 1999] and has since been reiterated in various government policy documents. The proposed new instrument would lay out the principles for cultural policies and trade and allow countries to maintain policies that promote cultural industries; seek to develop an international consensus on the responsibility to encourage indigenous cultural expression and on the need for regulatory and other measures to promote cultural and linguistic diversity; act as a blueprint for cultural diversity and the role of culture in a global world; and stress the importance of cultural sovereignty.

This proposal dovetails with efforts spearheaded by the Department of Canadian Heritage since the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development organized by UNESCO in Stockholm. That conference adopted an "Action Plan for Cultural Policies for Development" [UNESCO 1998] and recommended a series of policy objectives to UNESCO's

member states, in keeping with the general philosophical position that communication resources constitute part of "the global commons"<sup>28</sup>. Recognizing that "in a democratic framework civil society will become increasingly important in the field of culture", the conference endorsed a dozen principles including the fundamental right of access to and participation in cultural life, and the cultural policy objective of establishing structures and securing adequate resources necessary "to create an environment conducive to human fulfilment."

Since the Stockholm Conference, Canada has played a leadership role in creating an International Network on Cultural Policy whose purpose is "to build increased awareness and support for cultural diversity in an era of globalization and technological change... promot(e) culture as a key component of sustainable development... place culture front and centre on the international policy agenda... (and) strengthen cultural policies so that governments, together with civil society, can create an environment which values diversity of identity, creativity and freedom" [Canadian Heritage 1999a]<sup>29</sup>.

The stated role of the Network is "to ensure that culture is 'on the table' in international fora, either directly or indirectly, so that ministers can: raise awareness of the importance of cultural diversity; ensure cultural considerations are taken into account in international negotiations; show the link between national cultural objectives and international development" [op. cit.].

This experience can be seen as an embryonic working model for developing a new basis for global policy making in communication. If an appropriate mechanism for this could be established, **a global public policy approach to communication** might then address a range of issues that currently have no forum, such as

- regulation of commercial activities in the public interest, to guarantee equitable access and basic services;
- funding and institutional support for the creation and sustaining of public service and alternative media;
- placing limits on corporate controls resulting from transnational concentration of ownership in new and conventional media and telecommunications;
- guarantees of access to available media channels on the basis of public interest criteria;
- development of universal codes and standards for curtailing the spread of abusive contents;
- facilitating networking capacity through communication technologies of not-for-profit organizations;
- provision of public communication spaces for conflict resolution and democratic dialogue on global issues.

To illustrate, consider one important issue at the cutting edge of global communication

policy: the question of **Internet regulation**. The powerful technology of the Internet exacerbates many old problems related to communication policy at the national level and introduces new ones globally. Paradoxically, national regulators are tending towards abandoning attempts to regulate the Internet<sup>30</sup>, just as the global issues it raises cry out for some kind of transnational regulatory intervention. These issues have been developed at some length in a paper by New York University scholars John R. Mathiason and Charles C. Kuhlman [1999]. Their paper enumerates a list of problems<sup>31</sup> resulting from the technological characteristics of the Internet which, they argue, indicate that "the Internet today has reached a level of political importance where some form of governance policy is needed." The problem, of course, as they continue, is "to determine which policies to govern which aspects of the Internet"<sup>32</sup>.

Mathiason and Kuhlman indicate three possible approaches to Internet regulation: a **self-regulating market**, **national regulation**, or an **international regime**. In general terms, each of these models has serious limitations. It has been well established that market regulation, while possibly suitable for meeting certain economic objectives, does little to help achieve non-economic goals. As for national regulation, we have been staring its limitations in the face throughout this paper. The tendency today in every area of communication is towards an international regime; however, this would logically need to be opened up to greater representation than is allowed by the present framework of multilateral institutions, which focusses on individual member states and their corporate clients, as we saw earlier.

The authors suggest an "**international framework convention**" on the Internet, which would articulate basic norms of how the Internet is to be governed and establish a mechanism for monitoring compliance with those norms and determining future changes. A framework convention would be different from a treaty-based regime such as the one pertaining in trade under the auspices of the WTO. Its task would be to sort out the roles and responsibilities of the various national, international and private actors involved in the development of this "global enabling technology". It would need to be negotiated, they suggest, on the basis that the Internet is part of the global commons.

This type of proposal clearly depends on a broad consensus of what communication is about. It can only hope to work to the extent that communication technology is recognized as a public good. In other words, the normative view one takes about something like the Internet is much more important in determining the limits and possibilities of policy than the nature of the technology or the policymaking capacity of the state. **Debates surrounding the normative definition of communication technologies are therefore a key prerequisite to any attempt at global policy making in this area.** These debates should be as open and all-encompassing as reasonably possible, so that the positions taken by national governments in global policy arenas reflect some kind of social consensus.

Internationally, a general debate has begun on the need to address issues for ensuring the public interest in communication globally [see Javnost 1998]. The next step needs to be to create a permanent, democratic forum for developing appropriate policies.

The urgency of such a project is being driven home almost weekly by developments in the

field. In mid-September 1999, just as this text was being completed, CEOs of the world's most important communication companies met in Paris to discuss the global regulation of electronic commerce. According to the press release issued following their meeting, a consensus was reached. The Global Business Dialogue on Electronic Commerce (GBDe), as this group is known, "invited governments as well as international organizations" to join them in developing the tremendous potential of e-commerce: "A global medium like the Internet needs a global policy approach", said GBDe chairman Thomas Middlehoff, also chairman and CEO of the world's largest publishing company, Bertelsmann AG. "It is the consensus position of the GBDe that conflicting national patchwork regulation will deprive consumers of the economic benefits of an innovative marketplace and be a source of significant insecurity for them," he said. The GBDe therefore urged governments and international organizations to coordinate their regulatory efforts regarding e-commerce [PR Newswire, 1999].

It is fair to say that no longer does a week go by without a story such as this making it into the business and mainstream press - not to mention those stories that remain untold. This is but one example of the emerging global communications environment that I have been discussing in this paper, this increasingly seamless system of global communication that is evolving in a widely dispersed policy regime with no discernible centre. There is, however, unquestionably a clear policy framework taking shape. The agenda is being driven by big business, and other actors are cordially "invited" to take part.

I have tried to show that this situation presents a significant challenge to conventional thinking about communication policy and public policy in general. Reduced to its simplest expression, we have to be concerned about communication policy because of the pivotal role of the new communication environment in structuring almost every other area of public policy that the state has traditionally dealt with. Issues regarding communication policy are impacting not only the area immediately concerned but every other area as well. Meanwhile, as the example of the GBDe innocently shows, it is simply untrue to pretend that the globalization of communication means the end of policy. **It is rather the case that the sites of policy-making have shifted, vertically, from the national to the transnational, and horizontally, from the state to the boardroom.** Influencing the global framework in which communication is evolving, therefore, should be treated as a crucial strategic goal for the policy community.

Credibility will need to be given to the idea that the global communication environment, from the conventional airwaves to outer space, is a public resource, to be organized, managed and regulated in the global public interest. Broadening access will require appropriate transnational regulatory mechanisms, as well as mechanisms for a more equitable distribution of global commercial benefits. There is a need for the international appropriation of some air and space for distribution outside the country of origin of viable creative products that currently have no access to the new global agora that figures so prominently in utopian discourses on the new information technologies.

The convergence of communication technologies will require a parallel convergence in programs and policies, as well as the invention of new models, new concepts and a general new way of thinking about communication. This is nothing less than a global political project. If globalization

means that national states have to redefine their way of doing things; if it means that transnational capital must be brought into check as it becomes more and more of a determining force; it also means that democratic, civil society agents are going to need to organize and mobilize across national boundaries, and along new axes of identity, common purpose and solidarity. This is beginning to happen, especially among the emerging global networks of community and alternative media practitioners - as well as media users - in various parts of the world.<sup>33</sup>

Corporate-driven communication policy has been to all intents and purposes "globalized", but it is seeking a new basis for legitimacy that it can only receive to the extent that it is endorsed by national states, international organizations and, ultimately, civil society. This means that there is, at the present time, a political space in which global communication policy is disputed by various stakeholders. New rules are being written as you read this. The key question is: how can the participatory base of the new policy environment be broadened?

Recognition of the centrality of communication for global human development further underscores the importance of the emerging communication governance regime. In this respect, what I've been talking about should be seen as an essentially political issue, as part of the struggle for the democratization of the new global governance system. Communication is central to the development of what political theorist David Held calls "cosmopolitan democracy" [Archibugi & Held 1995].

This indicates a need to develop democratic mechanisms for ensuring access to the communication policymaking process at the global level, without which it will soon be impossible to promote a public interest through policy intervention *in any area* influenced by communication.

There are at present at least *four models* that we can identify with respect to the regulation of access to communication:

1. The libertarian model: no regulation. With the new digital technologies like the Internet, this is the approach that is currently being taken by most national regulators (including Canada's CRTC; Australia is an important exception), mainly because they do not know what to do or how to do it. It is also largely favoured by grassroots activists who are benefitting from this open communication system. But the history of communication technologies shows that left to its own devices, this open access is not likely to last. A libertarian model of Internet governance will likely lead eventually to closed doors, restricted access and limited communication.

2. Self-regulation: this is the approach most often favoured by industry players, with the encouragement of national regulators. It is currently being touted as the solution to problems such as abusive content and the protection of rights, on the argument that consumers will respond if they are not satisfied. But as we saw with the example of the GBDe, even the promoters of self-regulation are recognizing the need for a global structural framework for communication activity, within which industry self-regulation would take place.

3. The closed club, or top-down institutional model: where plans are negotiated in organizations such as the OECD, G7, or WTO, as well as in the new institutions emerging as the

corporate sector fills the vacuum created by the retreat of national governments from regulatory issues. One such agency that we will be hearing more of in the future is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), an organization set up at the initiative of the US government in 1998 for the purpose of directing traffic on the Internet.

4. The long march through the institutions: a process that is tied to the broader project of democratization of global governance, reflected in some of the initiatives around UN reform and again in notions such as "cosmopolitan democracy". Access to global policymaking is being fostered to some extent by some important initiatives in multilateral agencies such as UNESCO and the ITU which have demonstrated some openness to the concerns of civil society and the inclusion of NGO representation in their activities.

In terms of the overall analysis put forward in this paper, the latter path would seem to be indicated. The Canadian experience in communication policy, for one, is based on transparency and public participation and some of Canada's most significant achievements in communication grew out of the initiatives of civil society. These are values that are now worth promoting transnationally.

A clearer emphasis on the social and cultural role of communication would also provide a normative basis for proposals that Canada has been trying to develop in multilateral fora, such as the so-called "new international instrument" which would aim to offset the impact on culture of the WTO-based trade regime.

Finally, a global policy approach along these lines would help redefine the role of the state with respect to communication, both domestically and in its new transnational guise, while providing leverage for addressing a range of specific issues that are currently well off the agenda.

In the current context of globalization, communication can be either a locomotive of human development or just another technology of power and domination. Which it will be has not been determined. That is why the stakes of the current policy debates are so great.

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Appendix  
**The global communication policy environment**  
 (Selected Examples)

<b>THEMES</b>	<b>LEVELS</b>	<b>SITES</b>
	<u>Multilateral bodies</u>	
-Telecommunications:		ITU
-Culture		UNESCO
-Trade		WTO
-Development		World Bank, IMF
-Intellectual property		WIPO
-Human rights		UN
	<u>International "clubs"</u>	
-information infrastructure		G7/G8
-investment		OECD
	<u>Regional Treaties</u>	
-Cultural exception		NAFTA
-Television quotas		EU
-Principle of public broadcasting		EU
-Media concentration of ownership rules		EU

National Intervention  
(Canadian examples)

-Information highway policy	Industry Canada
-Broadcasting/telecom/internet regulation	CRTC
-Cultural policy	Canadian Heritage
-Public cultural institutions	CBC, NFB, etc.
-Cultural industries subsidies	Federal & provincial governments
-International co-productions	DFAIT

Transnational corporate sector

-Satellites	INTELSAT
-E-commerce	GBDe
-Technical standards	ISO (ITU)
-Telecom pricing	ITUG (ITU)
-Infrastructure development	GIIC (G7/G8)
-Investment	OECD input
-Trade liberalization	WTO input
-Direct lobbying of national governments and international organizations	

Civil society

-“Anti-globalization”	ATTAC Independent Media Centres
-Grassroots media	AMARC (radio) APC (Internet) CPSR
-Communication Rights	Platform for Comm. Rights People’s Comm. Charter CRIS campaign

“Transversal” Challenges

-Internet domain names and numbers	ICANN
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“Homeless” issues

- Transnational media regulation
  - access requirements
  - tax on benefits
  - obligations
  - performance evaluation
  - offensive content
- Creation and support for public media at the international level
- Internet regulation
- “New International Instrument on Cultural Diversity”
- People’s right to communicate

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1.A "shortlist" of issue areas and sites that characterize global communication policy is included as an appendix to this chapter.

2.In this respect, we can say that issues regarding the governance of communication are "meta-governance" issues - that is to say, issues whose outcome impacts not only the area concerned but all other areas as well.

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3. See Bernier and Collins (1998), for portrayal of the problem as it affects Canadian cultural policy.
  4. See Reinicke (1998), on strategies for implementing national "opting out" mechanisms in global policy development.
  5. For a case study of the playing out of this process in Canadian broadcasting policy, see Raboy (1995a and b).
  6. This area is covered in Ron Deibert's contribution to this book.
  7. In the 1960s, communications guru Marshall McLuhan - a genuine Canadian contribution to thinking on globalization if there ever was one - parodied the use of communication technology for military defense purposes in the Canadian north, by declaring that Canada itself was a Distant Early Warning system of global social and cultural trends.
  8. The study was conducted as part of a joint initiative of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the federal Department of Communication (now Canadian Heritage), entitled "Cultural Development and the Open Economy".
  9. General sources for this section include: Wallerstein (1991), Robertson (1992), Appadurai (1993), Chomsky (1993), Featherstone (1993), Frederick (1993), Pieterse (1994), Archibugi & Held (1995), Falk (1995), Castells (1997).
  10. A data base search of books and specialized journals done by World Bank economist and author Wolfgang Reinicke produced no title from 1971 with the words "global" or "globalization" in it; for 1995, Reinicke's search produced 1,200 results (Reinicke 1998).
  11. At the time this article was published, the seven were: Time-Warner (US), Disney (US), Viacom (US), Sony (Japan), Bertelsmann (Germany), News Corp. (UK/Australia), and Seagram (Canada). Time-Warner has since become AOL-TimeWarner, and Seagram has since been absorbed by Vivendi (France), but the basic premise of the *Economist* article remains unchanged.
  12. Unless otherwise mentioned, details in this section are taken from Raboy (1990).
  13. The case of "split-run" magazines referred to at the top of this paper is thus only one recent example of this.
  14. See for example, the extensive literature on Canada's "Information Highway Policy" debate. Several years after the government's official launching of that debate, much has been said, much is to be read, but Canada is still operating in a policy vacuum with respect to overall goals and direction of communication infrastructure development.
  15. The closest we have come at the moment is the government's response to the preliminary report of its Information Highway Advisory Council (see IHAC 1995, Canada 1996, IHAC 1997). This document indicates a general orientation and several specific pathways that Canadian

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communication policy may take in the future, but can not be said to constitute the type of encompassing policy that has been so long awaited. National policy in communication, as in many areas, continues to be made on an ad hoc basis, often in response to crisis or conjunctural needs.

16. Details in this section are drawn from Hamelink (1994) and Mattelart (1996).

17. Provision was made for private sector participation at the organization's second conference in Vienna in 1868, and non-government, corporate members were first admitted as early as 1871.

18. Today's ITU is composed of 184 government and 375 private members. According to its former director-general, Pekka Tarjanne, the role of the private sector in the ITU is perhaps the single most important strategic issue it has to face (Tarjanne 1997).

19. See, for example, Council of Europe, 1994.

20. See also ITU/UNESCO, 1995, a joint study that wondered to what extent societal goals could be reconciled with commercial objectives in this context. This interagency report represented a rare effort to bridge the gap between technical and sociocultural sectors in communication.

21. In 1999, telecom mergers and acquisitions in play included Deutsche Telekom / Telecom Italia (Europe), Bell Atlantic / GTE (USA), AT&T / TCI (USA), Ameritech / Bell Canada (US-Canada), AT&T Canada / Metronet (Canada), BC Tel / Telus (Canada), and the four Atlantic telecommunications companies (Canada).

22. The main transnational companies involved in information and communication technologies have since set up a Global Information Infrastructure Commission (GIIC) to continue pursuing their common interests in this area. Among the companies involved in the GIIC are Mitsubishi, Motorola, Viacom, Time-Warner, Olivetti, Sprint, AT&T, Nokia, Oracle, NEC, Alcatel Alsthom, Teleglobe Canada and Nippon Telegraph & Telephone (Venne 1995).

23. Civil society organizations have however been playing a critical monitoring role with respect to the GII, attending on the periphery of meetings such as the one in Brussels, circulating information and seeking representation through whatever channels happen to be available. See, for example, His (1996).

24. This impression is strengthened by the trend toward private sector development in domestic cultural policy. The most recent spate of CRTC decisions on television published in May-June 1999 unequivocally confirmed this trend.

25. This fits Reinicke's (1998) model of internal and external sovereignty.

26. In September 1997, European telecommunications commissioner Martin Bangemann, author of a high-profile blueprint for communication liberalization which bears his name, called for an "international charter" to govern the new world order in global communication. Within days, his remarks were endorsed by White House policy adviser Ira Magaziner, who stated that the U.S.

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believed there was a need for international understanding on information policy issues, "some of which may need to be formal agreements, some informal understandings and common approaches." This project - which may some day soon lead to a global agreement on communication governance - has been developing slowly and steadily, but entirely behind closed doors. It is yet another example of the need for transparency and democratic policy mechanisms.

27. Support for this position in Canadian public opinion was confirmed most recently in the June 1999 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, referred to at the top of this chapter (Canada 1999).

28. The proposals presented to the Stockholm conference were largely based on the 1995 report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (UN/UNESCO 1995).

29. The Network was the direct result of a meeting of ministers responsible for culture from some 20 countries, convened by Heritage Minister Sheila Copps in Ottawa in June 1998, to explore strategies for negotiating a general cultural exception from international trade agreements.

30. Including Canada's. See CRTC (1999). In this public notice, Canada's communications regulator proudly proclaimed that it would not regulate new media activities on the Internet.

31. Including, among others, the problem of preserving national, regional and local culture.

32. Mathiason and Kuhlman cite the issue of **domain name assignment** as one which stands "at the interface between the technological issues of Internet management and the economic and social issues that have emerged" (1999: 12).

33. For example, the Association for Progressive Communication, which brings together internet activists; Videazimut, an international NGO of video practitioners; AMARC, the World Association of Community-Oriented Radio Broadcasters. The People's Communication Charter ([www.pccharter.net/](http://www.pccharter.net/)), to take another type of example, has accumulated thousands of adherents since its launch in 1993. In mid-1999 a new global initiative called Voices 21 was launched with a view towards building "A Global Movement for People's Voices in Media and Communication in the 21st Century." See [www.comunica.org/v21](http://www.comunica.org/v21).