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### **Discerning the Dominant Discourse in the World Summit on the Information Society**

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MSc in Media, Communication and Development

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## **Discerning the Dominant Discourse in the World Summit on the Information Society**

**Ria Sen**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is an organisation that works to bridge global information-communication gaps. Since the ITU was the United Nations (UN) agency that commissioned the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the objective of this two-phase event was to make suggestions for bridging the ‘digital divide’ between developed and developing countries. The Summit was unique as it adopted a multi-stakeholder model. This enabled participants ranging from governments to civil society organisations and businesses to contribute to deliberations.

Evoking the discourse of participation, the WSIS aimed to convey a more inclusive vision of the Information Society (IS). It is paradoxical that the objective of this cooperation could potentially be to further competition through liberalisation and privatisation. In this regard, what is of concern is the means through which ‘participation’ could potentially be actualised, i.e. through North-South trade flows and technological diffusion. Therefore, this study seeks to examine if there is evidence of a dominant discourse in international debates about links between the network environment and development using the WSIS as a case study. In this regard, the presentation of traditional media in comparison to new media becomes especially important, for understanding where funding and expertise are channelled through the WSIS-created Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF).

Through a critical discourse analysis, the research will attempt to discern interdiscursive relations between participation and diffusion. It will thereby seek to uncover a dominant discourse in the WSIS context. This study revealed a discursive clash between diffusion and participation and the dominant discourse was found to be information communication technology development (ICTD). Whether the term ‘digital divide’ is inclusive enough to incorporate traditional media (e.g., broadcast media) requires further exploration. This is directly related to the issue of information and communication poverty, in that developmental divides may be exacerbated if the emphasis is mainly upon technological transfer, without due emphasis upon the dynamic nature of communication processes.

## **Abbreviations**

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

DA – Discourse Analysis

DOI – Digital Opportunity Index

DSF – Digital Solidarity Fund

ICSCP – International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems

ICT – Information Communication Technology

ICTs – Information Communication Technologies

ICTD – Information Communication Technology Development

ICT4D – Information Communication Technology for Development

ICT-OI – Information Communication Technology Opportunity Index

IS – Information Society

ITA – International Telecommunications Academy

ITU – International Telecommunications Union

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

NWEO – New World Economic Order

NWICO – New World Information and Communication Order

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PrepCom – Preparatory Committee

PS – Public Sphere

RQ – Research Question

SAPs – Structural Adjustment Programmes

UN – United Nations

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNESCO – United National Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society

## INTRODUCTION

Commissioned by the ITU, the WSIS was a two-phase series of conferences for bridging digital inequalities. It was considered a milestone in communications policy-making following the MacBride Report (1980). The ITU is a UN agency specialising in information communication technologies (ICTs) and emphasises their role in international development. ITU proceedings have also garnered criticism with respect to developed countries driving the deliberations and thereby influencing global policies.

Setting the backdrop for this study is the modernisation paradigm that emphasised a Western-style trajectory for developing countries (Rostow, 1960). Neoliberalism, with its emphasis on privatisation and liberalisation, is relevant in this context. What is of interest is how competing development paradigms, particularly diffusion and participation, influence the WSIS vision of an inclusive IS. Using the WSIS as a case study, I investigate whether ICTD is the dominant discourse in international debates about links between the network environment and development.

In the recent past, literature produced by UN bodies and multilateral agencies (see for instance UNCTAD, 2010; UNDESA, 2007; World Bank, 2005) has been focussed on ICTD, particularly broadband and mobile proliferation in developing countries. Scholars have attributed this to an emerging information and communication paradigm (Hamelink, 2004: 9-10). Central to the WSIS was its unique multi-stakeholder model, which involved a range of actors in the policy deliberation process. Paper submissions were encouraged by all participants. In this respect, the WSIS Final Reports (2005, 2003) are important for determining the development agenda for developing nations, in terms of where and how to channel funds and expertise.

The first phase of the Summit in Geneva was directed at creating a purposeful will for establishing an IS that benefits everyone. Participation borne of the multi-stakeholder model became a watchword for the deliberations. The International Telecommunication Academy (ITA) was one of the few independent media and communications non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that submitted a paper during the Geneva phase. Therefore, their position on the IS is especially relevant. The second phase was held in Tunis as a means for follow-up and implementation. This concluding segment was motivated by translating deliberations into concrete actions, such as financial provision through the DSF.

Since the Summit is concerned with the IS, global information-communication provision and exchange become important. It is then vital to understand whether new media ICT4D is replacing traditional media development. This will have significant ramifications, as UN recommendations usually serve as legislative guidelines in developing countries. In the light of this, scholars have noted the absence of a politico-historical context in WSIS recommendations (Mansell and Nordenstreng, 2006; Hamelink, 2004). The missing mention of North-South dependency, in connection with trade and aid provision, is indicative of this. ICTD can then be examined as a means for penetrating the developing world in this century (Escobar, 1999: 317-318).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Historical Background**

Scholars have been concerned with the lack of economic and political context in WSIS discourse (see for instance Padovani and Nordenstreng, 2005; Hamelink, 2004). This observation is important with respect to the investment ‘enabling environment’ outlined in the Tunis Report (2005: 4). In particular, Hamelink (2004: 282) revealed how little empirical evidence is provided for justifying why ICTs yield a ‘win-win situation’ in the WSIS. There is near to no justification provided as to why new media ICTs gain primacy over other forms of media and communication. The dominant discourse in the trade environment is important for explaining this, primarily neoliberalism (Hamelink, 2004).<sup>1</sup> Padovani and Nordenstreng (2005) attributed the decontextualised nature of WSIS discourse to a lack of historical perspective. They suggest focussing on important debates in the history of media and communications.

Mansell and Nordenstreng (2007: 19) articulated the need for mooring the WSIS to the ‘Great Media and Communication Debate’ centred on media diversity and North-South communication and access gaps. In order to examine discursive trends in the Summit, I proceed to outline milestones in communications policy-making. It has been pointed out that the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) is closely linked to the New World Economic Order (NWEО) (Tehrani, 1999: 40).

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<sup>1</sup> The neoliberal paradigm has been defined as ‘a political philosophy of competitive individualism which calls for minimal state involvement in economic and social regulation, associated with the emergence of the New Right (Reagan and Thatcher) in the 1980s and exemplified in the “Washington consensus” (Oxford University Press online, n.d.).

This implies that scholarship on the relationship between economics and communications was influenced by neoliberal discourse or emerged in reaction to it (Padovani and Nordenstreng, 2005). Pavlic and Hamelink (1998) discuss the ramifications of this discursive turn for communications policy. The neoliberal-informed belief in ‘free flow of information’ (Pavlic and Hamelink, 1986: 14) was thrown into question, as technology and infrastructure were not evenly developed. As the global market for information and communication expanded, what Pavlic and Hamelink (1986: 11) called ‘media-data convergence’ became an actuality. Therefore, the distinction between media development and ICTD gradually became unclear. Critiques and recommendations made by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (1980) led by Sean MacBride were vital in this respect.

The MacBride Report (1980) was instrumental for bringing to attention unequal information and communication flows. Again, the question of ‘free flow’ was considered, and the Report (1980: 141) argued that this was an ideological tool used by developed ‘communication rich’ countries at the expense of poorer nations. Of particular interest is the focus on news media and distortion in information-communication flows, expanded upon in NWICO debates. The phrase ‘dependency situation’ (MacBride Commission, 1980: 142) captures the problem of how most information is produced within developed nations and circulated in developing countries. The MacBride Commission also suggested that communication inequalities hamper democracy. Therefore, the Commission recommended that a pluralistic, free and fair media should be cultivated internationally.

While the MacBride Report emphasised a shift from information-dependence on the North to self-reliance, the WSIS reflected a marked discursive turn. The Tunis Report (2005: para. 31) discussed the need for North-South ‘interdependence’ and ‘cooperation’ within a singular Information Society. There also seems to be a revival of the Bretton Woods system, with the importance given to trade and ‘transfer of technology’ (WSIS, 2005: para. 54). For Padovani (2005a: 4) the ‘informational paradigm’ is central to WSIS, with its complex inter-linkage between power, communication flows and wealth. With this in mind, media development in the WSIS requires further examination.

## **Paradigms Feeding Into the WSIS – Diffusion and Participation**

Drawing upon Manyozo's (2011) conceptualisation, I understand media development to be efforts by organisations, people and governments to develop the quality and capacity of the media sector. In the WSIS, media development becomes a global enterprise, as recommendations are directed at bridging international information imbalances. I conceptualise new media ICTD, on the other hand, as that which is concerned with developing and sustaining relatively newer media forms (e.g., Internet, mobiles), thereby considered a subset of media development. In this regard, WSIS recommendations conceive of traditional media development as being synonymous with ICTs such as television and radio, while new media ICTD is inclusive of the Internet and mobile telephony (see for instance WSIS, 2003: 14).

### *Diffusion*

Diffusion, as conceived of by Rogers (1962), emphasised the transfer of an innovation amongst people, over time, using media channels. While reviewing the 'dominant paradigm' in development communication, Rogers (1976) stated modernisation was central for its conception. Subsequently, Mansell (1982: 54) revealed that the revision in the 'dominant paradigm' was nothing but the "Diffusion Model" in new clothes'. Modernisation presupposes that certain conditions induce democratisation, chief among these was economic development (Przeworski and Neto, 1997). In a similar vein, the WSIS discourse presents ICTs as the panacea for underdevelopment (Hamelink, 2004: 287).

Central to the 'dominant paradigm' was industrialisation, which for Lerner (1958: title) contributed to hastening 'the passing of traditional society'. Modernisation was conceptualised as a simulation of Western industrial growth. The shortfall in this approach was the limited emphasis on multiple pathways to development. Lerner (1958) granted a central place to the media, which he thought stimulated democratisation, especially in newly decolonised countries. There is qualified criticism (see for instance Lee as cited in Servaes, 1999: 28) directed at Lerner's conceptualisations, particularly his unconvincing construction of a personality typology. However, what is of importance is the presentation of economic growth and capital-intensive technology as the medicine for underdevelopment (Escobar, 1995: 41-42). Media development too was thought to further national progress (Lerner, 1958). What is of interest in this project is whether ICTD has conceptually replaced the erstwhile dominant concept of traditional media development.



The seemingly subsidiary focus on traditional media development in the WSIS is cause for concern. Schramm (1964) provided evidentiary support for the claim that mass media was positively correlated with national development. Arguably, the media was not the sole prerequisite for development, but it was a contributory factor for accelerating the process. Schramm's theoretical justifications as to why and how information in general and media in particular are instrumental for national development echo Rogers' (1976) 'dominant paradigm'. The problem with this model is that it presents a simplistic stage-oriented approach to development. In this regard, qualified criticism came from the structuralists.

Modernisation theory was critiqued by the *dependistas* who observed that trade flows from the 'periphery' to the 'centre' worked to keep the former in a state of perpetual 'dependency'.<sup>2</sup> The critique revealed that the interdependence within global markets amounted to subservience to Western developmental goals, perpetuated by unequal terms of trade (Kay, 1989; Escobar, 1992). For all their pioneering scholarship, the structuralist approach struggled to provide solutions for the problems they delineated (Servaes, 1999: 45). The inequality they identified permeated into communications, where there was a growing realisation of a one-way flow from the West to the rest (Herman and McChesney, 1997; MacBride Commission, 1980).

In particular, Escobar's (1992) criticisms of the presentation of poverty in the 'third world' reflects the dangers of a discourse of development inflected with neoliberal interests that are championed by multilateral agencies and international organisations. Therefore, poverty in information-communication resources becomes a matter of North-South power relations. The validation for diffusion of particular ICTs seems to be driven by the logic of science, granted a 'central role' (WSIS, 2003: para. 3) in the IS. The 'promise of science and technology' (Escobar, 1994: 35-39) has long been a discursive strategy for validating neoliberal policy instruments in developing country contexts.

### *Participation*

Another discursive strand present in WSIS texts is that of participation, best represented by the multi-stakeholder model. With a participatory framework in place, the WSIS Report (2005: para. 3) makes a case for North-South cooperation and 'interdependence'. Opening up the debate to civil society was important in this regard. However, there were many 'absent others' (Servaes and Carpentier, 2006: 11) and the low level of participation by media

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<sup>2</sup> The propositions of the structuralist school of development were put forth by the UN Economic Commission of Latin America. They criticised dominant neoclassical economic approaches to development that legitimized growth based on Western development paths (Kay, 1989: 25).

representatives was surprising, since the Summit itself was based on information *and* communication issues. In particular, Cammaerts and Carpentier (2006) illustrate that participation in the WSIS was mere rhetoric, as international institutions sought to legitimise policy through support from civil society and business. In such instances, participation can degenerate into a tokenistic seal of approval (Arnstein, 1969). It would, however, be unfair to completely discount the progress made during the WSIS, as it was indeed the first UN Summit that included multiple stakeholders (Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2005: 39).

The WSIS was directed at resolving the 'digital divide'. For Staes (2006: 2), 'digital exclusion' is intrinsically related to socio-economic exclusion. In this respect, the discourse of participation becomes central for creating and justifying conditions that sustain democratic dialogue in the IS. However, in assuming a singular IS, cultural plurality and media diversity are thrown into question (Mansell, 2006). This is because a universal conception of the IS does not allow for incorporating pluralism and differences between and within nations. Padovani (2005b: 270) suggests an alternative; that instead of an IS, 'Knowledge Societies' would convey a more participatory WSIS vision. It has also been recommended that rather than a 'digital divide', a 'communications divide' would be more holistic, as it takes into account more than technological access issues (Nordenstreng and Padovani, 2005: 268; Hamelink, 2004).

Based on Giddens' (1984) conceptualisation, central to participatory approaches is the 'dialectic of control', where the less powerful can potentially exert control over more powerful actors, usually in terms of management of resources. In this context, Servaes (1999) discusses the importance of structural constraints that influence the exercise of power. This allows for a linkage to extant geopolitical conditions, especially dominant information-communication paradigms, and how they privilege actors such as industrialised countries. In this respect, the role of traditional media becomes important when considering global information-communication flows.

In the light of the poor participation of the media in the WSIS, it is important to consider problems encountered when actualising a more inclusive participatory process. Servaes (1999: 196) identified central 'barrier[s] to participation' that can be used to understand why media development may be subsidiary to ICTD. For Servaes (1999: 196-197), participative projects are not in the interest of those seeking 'high visibility', i.e. tangible and observable developmental outcomes. This is applicable to funding mechanisms for development programmes, such as the WSIS's DSF. Funding, according to Servaes (1999: 196-197), is

usually directed at ‘highly-structured program[m]es’ emphasising ‘quantitative targets’ and ‘quick evaluation’.

The situation becomes complex when we consider structural differences between developed and developing countries. More often than not, Western models of transition from monopolies to competitive markets have been applied to developing countries. Countries in the global South are facing challenges of opening markets to foreign players for building telecommunications infrastructure, whilst simultaneously attempting to protect traditional media forms and community media (Alonso, Barroso, Gonzalez, Laguia, and Villaverde, 2005: 188).<sup>3</sup> In addition, Mansell and Nordenstreng (2007: 16) argue that media diversity concerns and communication access gaps between wealthy and poorer countries are still existent. This, in part, justifies why the study is relevant at present.

### **Statement of the Research Question**

Based on the literature review, the research question (RQ) is stated as follows – *Is there evidence of a consistently dominant discourse in international debates about the links between the network environment and development?* Using the WSIS as a case study, I draw on discourses of participation and diffusion to critically examine how new media ICTD in conjunction with the neoliberal discourse may be echoed in WSIS debates on the IS. I proceed to provide my understanding of key terms in the RQ.

**Table 1** Key Terms related to the Research Question

<b>Term</b>	<b>Explication</b>
Network environment	Refers to an interconnected system, which encompasses not only technological and infrastructural aspects, but also access issues, amongst others. I include both new media and traditional media ICTs in this conceptualisation.  I focus specifically on the IS, as this was the concentration of the World Summit.
Development	This study adopts a holistic approach, in that it views development as that which encompasses social and economic aspects (Quebral as cited in Manyozo, 2011: 320; Servaes, 1999: 19-20; Escobar 1995).

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<sup>3</sup> There are exceptions, as traditional media may be owned by authoritarian states or by oligarchs.

ICT4D	Partially drawing upon Unwin's (2009) understanding, I associate ICT4D with information communication technology for the purpose of furthering any form of (inter)national development.
ICTD	Partially based on Heeks' (2010) understanding, ICTD refers to the development of information communication technology; usually emphasising infrastructure, funding concerns, trade and/or technological transfer and capacity building.  ICTD is linked to ICT4D in that the development of ICT usually takes place for broader (inter)national developmental goals.

**Source:** Compiled by author.

## Conceptual Framework

Using neoliberalism as a locus and drawing upon Giddens' (1984) conceptualisation of structuration, this study focuses on North-South power relations in WSIS discourse. It will contribute to existent WSIS scholarship by finding out whether ICTD is the dominant discourse for establishing links between the network environment and development. This project is driven by the question - Has the dominant development paradigm passed or is it merely 'superficial revisionism' (Mansell, 1982); specifically whether the WSIS discourse is informed by a diffusionist approach couched in the language of participation.

Central to this discussion is the neoliberal paradigm that has influenced communications policy-making in recent years. Neoliberalism emphasises the efficacy of the market in resource allocation. Government by and through the market is central for determining production, especially by 'contracting out' to the private sector (Peters, 1999: 5). Therefore, neoliberalism is an important political and institutional project that has informed policy discourse and practice (Campbell and Pederson, 2001: xi-xii). This makes it central to WSIS discourse, which appears to favour neoliberalism for facilitating integration of regional telecommunication markets.

I examine the neoliberal paradigm through focussing on 'free' trade. Economic integration has been driven by unrestricted control over capital (Peters, 1999: 7). Despite some benefits, the damaging effects of unchecked flows of capital and the vagaries of the global market have manifested themselves in developmental inequalities. It is this debate that has been revived by the WSIS, where the chief concern was the growing 'digital divide'. An important question is whether the market is 'free' to begin with. Raboy (2004: 225) discusses the 'cultural bias of technology', relevant for this study's ICTD and media development debate. In fact, an ITU-

UNESCO (1995) report entitled *The right to communicate: at what price?* is one amongst many publications that catalogue negative effects of protectionist trading barriers to telecom investment. Such studies have been used to validate a universal information infrastructure.

With the potential ICTs have to link the world, globalisation is central for explaining connections between the network environment and development. Giddens' (1999: 7) reference to an emergent 'global order' has been perpetuated, in part, by global interconnectedness through media. Sceptics discount globalisation as 'ideology' advanced by free-market proponents (Giddens, 1999: 9). However, globalisation is a very real process and the integration of markets has partially been facilitated by ICT. Therefore, globalisation is not restricted to economics as it includes political, cultural and technological dimensions; accelerated by economic liberalism (Giddens, 1999: 10-14).

The connection between nations and global economic systems was developed by Wallerstein. Drawing from globalisation and capitalism, Wallerstein's (2004) world-systems theory is useful for understanding how geographical regions are consonant with flows of goods.<sup>4</sup> This is of relevance to the research that seeks to examine North-South relations *vis-à-vis* trade and technology transfer. Though Wallerstein adopts 'core-periphery' as terminology, this study acknowledges that globalisation does not translate into Westernisation alone.

Countries constituting the global North and South possess a multiplicity of differences. It would be simplistic to assume that states are akin to pre-packaged 'commodities' (Evans, 1989: 562), possessing generalisable characteristics based on geographical classifications (i.e., 'North' and 'South'). However, we may assume that certain policy mechanisms are likely to induce neoliberal economic conditions, such as liberalisation and privatisation (Mosco, 1996: 202-203). There have been concerns that existent institutional structures (in this case, the ITU) fail to equally represent less powerful nations and are driven by policy interests of developed countries (Mosco, 1996: 204). In this context, Giddens' (1984) conceptualisation of structure and agency becomes relevant.

I use Giddens' (1984) concept of 'structure' to explain institutional mechanisms for influencing information-communication flows. The creation of a global communications infrastructure requires coordination between states, administered by organisations such as the ITU. On the other hand, for Giddens, 'agency' implies the ability to engage in resistance,

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<sup>4</sup> Wallerstein (2004) theorised the relationship between nations in the global economic environment as a 'world-system'. Within this system, the 'core' consists of industrially advanced states while the 'periphery' is that which is reliant on the core for determining trading conditions. The basis for the positioning of nations is economic.

where power is countered through action (Gaventa, 2003: 7). It can be used to explain the potential of participation by external media and communications organisations, such as the ITA in the WSIS. Structuration is useful for understanding social relations in an international economic context.<sup>5</sup> The ‘duality’ of structure is evident in that though power involves voluntary human activity, it is more a quality of society than a people (Hajer as cited in Sadan, 1999: 19).

Structuration theory may not be radical enough if it is integrated with a project that preserves structures of domination (Gaventa, 2003: 8). Giddens, like Foucault, realised that power can be positive. According to Gaventa (2003), Giddens offers an inadequate conceptual framework for examining the ‘power of discourse’. This is a key reason why I draw upon Foucauldian conceptions of knowledge, power and discourse. This helps to overcome a shortfall in Giddens’ theorisation, whereby greater importance is ascribed to the agent. The Foucauldian understanding of the circularity of power is useful for understanding discursive structures and how they construct a ‘regime of truth’ (Hall, 2001: 47). Since Giddens and Foucault converge on the importance of power, combining their respective approaches will be beneficial.

Having provided a conceptual base, I proceed to summarise the gap in the literature and how it will be filled. The pilot project established the existence of competing discourses in the WSIS, namely diffusion and participation. Some scholars have examined whether the Summit’s outcomes were effective (see for instance Hamelink, 2004). Others have investigated the tokenistic notion of participation in the WSIS (see for instance Cammaerts and Carpentier, 2006; Servaes, 1999). Of especial importance is Padovani’s (2005a) research, which traced the changing discourse in communications policy from the MacBride Report to the WSIS. Yet, Padovani does not examine conflicting discourses, or even whether new media ICTD is the dominant discourse in the World Summit. This study will examine a potential clash between participation and diffusion and determine whether there is a dominant discourse in the WSIS.

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<sup>5</sup> Giddens (1982: 376) defines structuration as ‘(t)he structuring of social relations across time and space, in virtue

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Addressing the Question of Competing Research Methodologies**

Discourse analysis (DA) was deliberately chosen over content analysis as the RQ could not be answered by solely using numerical frequency to generate statistical data. Though there are various approaches for analysing discourse, those based upon textual aspects (e.g., thematic text analysis) or upon dialogue (e.g., conversation analysis) were found to be inappropriate. This was because the RQ required considering textual context and societal implications (Fischer, 2003; Meyer, et al., 2000: 24), specifically linking the historical background of development communications policy to the present.

DA was thought to be an appropriate research methodology, since this study is concerned with North-South power relations conveyed through discourse. Of interest are the conditions for the creation of discourses, the simultaneous existence of multiple discourses and their dialogue with one another (Foucault, 1972). Crucial to the analysis is whether some (discourses) are privileged at the expense of others, and to what effect (Fischer, 2003: 74). It remains to be examined whether a discursive clash exists in the WSIS, through identifying interdiscursive relations and by the existence of a dominant discourse (Foucault, 1979: 31-40).

A pilot study was conducted with a small sample, and the results can be utilised to further the research. Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was found to be incompatible with the research. The pilot confirmed Wodak's (2001: 2) claim that when the texts are comparatively long, the effects of CDA are diluted. CDA did, however, make it possible to discuss how power is exercised from above, in this case by multilateral financial institutions and developed countries. However, identifying the dominant discourse does not imply that there exists no counter-discourse (Van Dijk, 1993: 149). Though CDA was useful for identifying a counter-discourse, it was a limited approach in the WSIS context as the texts were too long to conduct the analysis.

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of the duality of structure'.

## **Selection and Development of a Methodological Approach**

The study required greater consideration of whether there existed a counter-discourse in the texts. From the pilot project, this was identified as the discourse of participation. Adopting a Foucauldian (1969/1972) framework of a critical discourse analysis was thought to be beneficial in this regard.<sup>6</sup> This is because it acknowledges that discourses engage in dialogue with one another, best witnessed in what Foucault (1978: 13) called ‘interdiscursive dependencies’.

The analysis will examine the sample at *micro* and *macro* levels, by respectively studying grammatical and linguistic arrangements and how they are translated into enactment through text (Kroger and Wood, 2003: 23). The interdiscursive aspect bridges the *micro* and *macro* analyses, as it is concerned with how language is a way for distributing power and authority. Foucault’s understanding of the ‘organising principles’ (Fischer, 2003: 75) of social action through the construction of ‘truths’, is especially relevant. This implies power ‘structures basic social definitions, meanings, and interactions in a socio-cultural system’ (Fischer, 2003: 75). Foucault shows that officially produced knowledges function as ‘instruments of normalisation’ (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 16), making ‘normal’ tantamount to the correct way of functioning/thinking.

The pilot project indicated the need for a methodology for analysing discourse in policy recommendations. This was satisfied through the incorporation of Apthorpe’s (1996) three-dimensional development policy DA that operates within a Foucauldian framework (see Table 2 on the following page). Owing to Foucault’s ‘*constitutive*’ (Fischer, 2003: 38; emphasis in original) view of discourse, he identified a clear relationship between discursive constructions, society and institutions. Therefore, a Foucauldian DA can be employed with other approaches as it is considered a dialogic methodology. In this regard, Apthorpe’s approach could easily be incorporated with that of Foucault’s.

It is worth expanding upon why Apthorpe’s DA technique was chosen. Foucault’s approach was beneficial for understanding discursive strategies used to create a sense of legitimacy, contributing to a discursive ‘regime of truth’. However, there was a need for understanding how policy instruments are used for generating consensus. Apthorpe’s (1996) emphasis on how power is translated, distributed and disseminated through policy is especially relevant. Of particular importance are the use of techniques for justifying policies (Apthorpe, 1996:

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<sup>6</sup> Foucauldian DA is ‘critical’ as it is driven by a counter-reading of ‘historical and social conditions and offers possibilities for social critique and renewal’ (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 27).



18). The assumption of ‘norms’ in policy text and the construction of ‘truths’ through the assumed neutrality of science and economics allows for forging a link between Apthorpe’s DA and Foucauldian DA.

**Table 2** Adapted Methodological Approach

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Adapted Foucauldian (1972) approach to DA</b>	<b>Apthorpe’s (1996) three-dimensional development policy DA</b>	<b>Intersections</b>
<b>Grammatical analysis</b>	Micro-power: How grammar itself is governed by rules, as are academic disciplines.	Structure: Linguistic tools oriented toward consensus-building, conveyed through the wording of the text.	Grammatical structures contribute to the creation of discourse/s in the texts.
<b>Interdiscursive analysis</b>	Intertextual dependency: Complex relationships between discourses contributing to the creation of other discourse/s.	Function: Distribution of power through text/s, by employing various policy construction strategies such as the use of logic, justification and persuasion.	How ‘norms’ are deliberately constructed. The role of institutions in preserving and maintaining power and the possibility of resistance.
<b>Providing discourse with a socio-historical context</b>	Macro-power: How micro-power is replicated and enacted in a global context, strategies of how power operates, particularly through ‘normalisation’ of official knowledges.	Performance: The enactment of power through discourse particularly conveyed in policy.	How ‘knowledge’ contributes to the creation of universal ‘truths’.

**Source:** Compiled by author.

*Note:* See Appendix 1.1 for further details on the methodological approach.

## **Limitations of the Methodological Approach and Proposed Solutions**

Though analysis was conducted on sections of WSIS-produced texts, it had the benefit of yielding contextually concrete results. Generalisations were not feasible as the findings were illustrative of the sample examined (Van Dijk, 1993: 252). In using Foucault, the difficulty lay in actualising his conceptualisation of discourse, which is both theory and method (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2006). Foucault did not provide steps for conducting a DA, which also posed a challenge (Hook, 2001: 1). This was mitigated by integrating Apthorpe's and Foucauldian approaches. An additional critique is that Foucault's conception of discourse is more concerned with knowledge and power, as compared to grammatical aspects (Hook, 2001: 36). However, Apthorpe's approach possesses a dimension that examines grammar in-depth, thereby helping to overcome this issue.

It must also be observed that much of Foucault's scholarship was contextually moored to the West. Foucault did, however, encourage others to apply his discursive theorisation to the global South (Escobar, 1999: 310). In this regard, certain themes in the WSIS discourses will be examined using Foucauldian guidelines. Other themes were excluded because of a lack of time or relevance. Therefore, bias has long been a critique of DA as a methodology (Van Dijk, 1995: 19). However, in acknowledging subjectivity, there is an implicit assumption that the study focuses on key areas for answering the RQ. Other methodological concerns were those of relatively low reliability and validity. This is because an element of subjectivity influences meaning-making by different analysts. In an effort to increase the validity and to make the research procedure more transparent, a detailed analytic framework was constructed.

## **Selection of the Sample**

There is no randomness in the generation of a sample in a DA (Gunter, 2000: 91). The deliberately selected sample includes relevant sections of WSIS Reports (2005, 2003) and one position paper issued by the ITA (2003). The texts were first read and then sections were carefully chosen, guided by four research themes. Had this project been unbounded by time constraints, additional insights may have been garnered through a DA conducted on complete WSIS and PrepCom reports.

The sample can be considered comprehensive, because the WSIS 'Declaration of Principles' and ITA recommendations were examined in their totality. By considering the Principles produced in both phases of the Summit, attempts were made to document discursive changes, if any. Besides the 'Declaration of Principles', sections relevant to empirical research areas of this project were examined in the 'Plan of Action' in WSIS Reports. In

particular, the sections that focussed on financial mechanisms (DSF) and measures of ICT progress through the ICT Opportunity Index (ICT-OI) and the Digital Opportunity Index (DOI) were analysed.

The ITA's (2003) position paper was selected in order to understand how WSIS-produced discourse can impact discourses produced by independent media and/or communications organisations. This document was one amongst the few produced by an international media and communications NGO during the Summit. Therefore, it was considered informative for discerning the discursive dialogue and intersections between the WSIS and ITA policy recommendations.

## **Design of Research Tools**

### *Adapting Foucault's conception of 'knowledge/power'*

Central to this research was the exploration of the Foucauldian conception of 'knowledge/power' (Foucault as cited in Gaventa, 2003: 4). In this respect, the way officially sanctioned knowledges are produced by international organisations (here, the ITU) are relevant. These 'knowledges' contribute to the consolidation of discourse/s, building upon their prominence in a historical context. A historically relevant example would be the prevalence of the neoliberal economic paradigm in the nineteenth century. Official knowledges and/or academic disciplines contribute to the creation of 'truths' through 'instruments of normalisation' (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 17). This understanding is vital for informing the study's investigation of discursive techniques for bringing about 'normalisation'.

Power, for Foucault, is a 'discursive *relation*' (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 21; emphasis in original). Therefore, discursive intersections between WSIS and ITA documents will provide insights on whether some discourses are given primacy over others. As Foucault was less concerned with *who* is in power, the focus in the study will be *how* power is installed. In this regard, policy techniques that contribute to the creation of power structures shall be examined. 'Truth' becomes a functionality of what can be said, written or thought. 'Power' becomes a means for the perpetuation of 'truths'. This is fraught with difficulties, because there is no essential 'truth', but many competing versions. Notably, power is not only restrictive but is also productive. Power relations are not always established between equals and asymmetry may give rise to dominance, but not necessarily suppression. It is here that Giddens' (1984) conception of structure and agency becomes important. Though 'structure'

enforces particular rules, 'agency' is the means for conveying resistance. This dialectic will be explored in the empirical research areas.

### *Empirical Research Areas*

The research question was operationalised as follows. Based on a close reading of the texts, a thematic guideline was created. The documents were then analysed in detail. Subsequently, the texts were annotated. With the progression of the analysis, word-clusters linked to different discourses (intertextuality) emerged in the texts. For instance, the discourse of participation was conveyed through the phrases 'people-centred', 'general welfare'. Though ascertaining the socio-historic dimension of the DA was most challenging, textual ambiguity in certain areas (such as the lack of a definition of the IS) brought to the fore questions relevant to power dynamics between the North, the South and international organisations. Lastly, Foucault's (1972) and Aphorpe's (1996) DA approaches were combined to devise an analytic framework, where the main findings were inserted.

Four areas were focussed on in WSIS Reports and the ITA Position Paper. They are discussed as follows -:

#### The investment environment and North-South relations<sup>7</sup>

Drawing on Foucault's concern of how power installs itself, DA will be used to examine the role of science and economics for validating trade and technology transfer.<sup>8</sup> Linking this to North-South power relations is possible through a Foucauldian DA, wherein the fluidity of power is a prerequisite. In this context, understanding Giddens' structure versus agency debate is vital with respect to North-South relations. Rather than making simplistic deductions about where and under what conditions 'structure' and 'agency' operate in WSIS discourse, instances of when they are conflated will be identified and subjected to analysis.<sup>9</sup> Identifying examples of competing discursive strands of participation and diffusion will be crucial. An attempt will also be made to identify the dominant discourse.

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<sup>7</sup> The word 'relations' is of key importance here. Foucault and Giddens both conceive power as that which is not solely top-down, but is also productive and positive.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault was concerned with the 'field of power' as opposed to the 'authors of power' (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 21). Therefore, the study will focus on how power is produced and replicated.

<sup>9</sup> Similar to Foucault, Giddens' understanding of 'structure' and 'agency' did not interpret the one as restrictive and the other as enabling. Rather, a discourse may evoke elements of both that compete to gain primacy (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 7).

### Representation of the 'digital divide'

The study will investigate whether discussions on the 'digital divide' are dominated by North-driven dissemination of technology and new media ICTD in comparison with traditional forms of media. In this regard, the discursive representation of traditional media will be considered. The question can be put as follows - Is the term 'digital' in the 'digital divide' limited to new media ICTs? Alternatively, is Norris' (2001) conception of the 'global divide' that is focused on Internet access issues, used interchangeably with the 'digital divide' in the WSIS? Therefore, policy-strategies and motivations provided for bridging the 'digital divide' are of importance. As is mentioned in the WSIS (2003), benefits of ICTD are thought to be manifold, from bridging social inequalities to bettering governance. Therefore, the proposed benefits of closing the digital gap will also be considered.

### Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF)

The DSF was a funding mechanism conceived during the Geneva Plan of Action, primarily directed at ICTD in developing nations. DA will be employed to study the presentation of the DSF in the WSIS context, particularly how this may be influenced by discourses of neoliberalism and modernisation. Policy instruments used for generating consensus will be analysed. The motivation for the provision of aid and the relationship between aid and trade will be further examined. The validations for investing in ICTs will also be considered, particularly how they could appeal to developing countries. The utilisation of funding is a point of discussion, in order to understand whether new or traditional media development is given a central place.

### Progress measurement indices

The ICT-Opportunity Index (ICT-OI) and the Digital Opportunity Index (DOI) were two ITU-created statistical progress measurement indicators for comparing ICTD and measuring the 'digital divide' on a global scale. Attempts will be made to compare the ICT-OI and the DOI, in terms of their constituent indicators. However, their methodological approaches for generating statistics will not be examined. Constituent variables of both indices will be studied for understanding whether more traditional forms of media are being replaced by new media forms, when judging ICT progress of countries. Rather than focussing on investment statistics, this section will explore discursive implications of investing in certain forms of media and the language employed to make a case for the same.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Grammatical Analysis**

The WSIS (2003: para. 4) appeals to the international community by making the IS an issue concerning '(e)veryone everywhere'. A compound subject articulates the text, evocative of the discourse of participation. The use of personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'our' (see for instance WSIS, 2005: para. 1) conveys a collective identity. The reading audience is made to feel a sense of inclusiveness; part of this constructed 'we'. The speaking voice has been called 'representatives of the peoples of the world' (WSIS, 2005: para. 1), a generalisation which is problematic in that many governments and communities were unrepresented at the Summit. The projected 'we', therefore, is not fully inclusive.

The tenses adopted in the texts are useful for examining the presentation of policy recommendations. Present tense has been employed to convey urgency for justifying actions, such as the current pressing need for ICTD (eg., WSIS, 2005: para. B18; ITA, 2003: para. 5; WSIS, 2003: para. 67). Past tense has mainly been used when discussing aspects deemed status quo, for instance the assumption of prevalent neoliberal economic conditions in the texts (eg., WSIS, 2005: para. B15; ITA, 2003: para. 5; WSIS, 2003: para. 51). Future tense has been employed to convey normative perceptions regarding ICTD, such as establishing a positive correlation between ICTD and economic growth (eg., WSIS, 2005: para. 9; ITA, 2003: para. 5; WSIS, 2003: para. 19). A grammatical commonality between all tenses is the use of modal verbs, such as the use of 'can', 'should' and 'will' which conveys a high degree of surety regarding the desirability of ICTD.

The WSIS (2005: para. 24) recommends 'cross-sectoral and cross-institutional coordination'. However, governments were given most importance in deliberations (WSIS, 2005: para. 3, 35 and 13). Concentration of power also occurs through the policy strategy of 'naming', specifically the use of 'dualisms' (Apthorpe, 1996: 7; Escobar, 1992: 7), i.e. 'less developed' and 'developed'. Gradations were also observed in the nomenclature for developing countries, such as 'Least Developing Countries' and 'Highly Indebted Poor Countries' (WSIS, 2005: para. 21 and 23b). This can be seen as a strategy to allow industrialised nations to take decisions on behalf of less powerful actors.

In terms of the genre, the documents considered were policy recommendations. Heightened adjectives convey the urgent requirement of ICTD. For example, ICTs are said to present 'enormous' (WSIS, 2003: para. 12) opportunities. Using vocabulary borrowed from science and technology, ICTs are called 'tools' and 'powerful instruments' for inducing development

(WSIS, 2003: para. 9). The ‘neutrality’ of science is used to encourage North-South cooperation through transfer of technology and research outcomes (WSIS, 2003: para. 10). Since ICTs are said to have a ‘tremendous positive impact’ (WSIS, 2005: para. 11), another policy strategy adopted by the texts is cataloguing their benefits. The impacts seep into ‘all aspects’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 8) of life, which further heightens the desirability of ICTD.

### **Interdiscursive Analysis**

#### *Knowledge/power and discourse*

For Escobar (1995), a characteristic trait of the developing world was its poverty. In the WSIS context, this can be read as poverty in information and communication resources, infrastructure and skills. The solutions, premised upon modernisation, are proposed as economic growth and development. These became ‘self-evident, necessary and universal truths’ (Escobar, 1995: 24). The global North has been encouraged to provide aid, in terms of finances and expertise, to the South. The logic is that richer countries have the ‘financial and technological capacity’ (Escobar, 1995: 39) for furthering global progress. In this context, trade and technology transfer become key strategies for bridging the ‘digital divide’. However, the danger lies in the promotion of a Western developmental pattern, deemed to be a ‘normal course of evolution and progress’ (Escobar, 1995: 26).

A link can be drawn between power strategies and the creation of ‘truths’ at *micro* and *macro* levels. As Foucault (1972) observed, ‘disciplines’ are premised upon objectivity which renders their findings unbiased. This facilitated the removal of political and cultural contexts of developmental ‘problems’, to ‘recast’ them in the ‘more neutral realm of science’ (Escobar, 1995: 45). As the WSIS and ITA use such arguments to justify ICTD, their findings appear ‘neutral’. This assumed neutrality allows the texts to convey the ‘truth’. Knowledge, therefore, becomes the way power is enacted (Foucault, 1972). This is because it is used to formulate WSIS recommendations, which in turn shape national policies. Knowledge also ‘normalises’ practices and thoughts, most evident in the texts that make a case for ‘mainstreaming’ (WSIS, 2005: para. 19a) ICTD, thereby presenting it as the developmental norm.

#### *Discourse of economics*

A number of discursive influences were identified. The discourse of economics and science are central for informing the texts from a Foucauldian perspective. The discourse focuses upon modernisation and economic development, with numerous mentions of diffusion and ‘transfer of technology’ (eg., WSIS, 2005: para. 9; WSIS, 2003: para. 44). These have been

seen as ‘inevitable’ (Escobar, 1995: 39) routes to modernisation. Interestingly enough, the ITA (2003: para. 1) conflates the IS with the ‘Worldwide economy’. This echoes the WSIS (2003: para. 51) premise that ICTs enable access to local and global markets.

### *Discourse of science and technology*

The discursive influences of science and technology are ‘central’ to the WSIS’s (2005: para. 7) conception of the IS. Because scientific findings are premised upon ‘fact’, they are assumed to be rational by virtue of *being* science (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 63). Similarly, Escobar (1995: 93) brings to attention a view that economic theory was partially constructed from ‘preexisting reality independent of the theorist’s observations’. Science is considered the ‘building blocks’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 7) of the IS. Advancing this premise, the ITA (2003: para. 5) calls for ‘urgent economic and technologic’ steps to be taken by the North for providing technological and financial aid to the South. Here, economics and technology are considered to be interrelated. Therefore, ‘(s)cientific essentialism is a way of hiding the content of science from the scrutiny of close study’ (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 66). The WSIS justifies its conception of the IS by using the ‘neutrality’ of science. This can be viewed as a policy strategy to persuade developing country governments to adopt WSIS tenets.

### *Discourse of diffusion*

The texts mention diffusion through ‘transfer of technology’ (WSIS, 2005: para. B9). They make a case for ICT-promotion based on the logic that it leads to development (WSIS, 2003: para. 22). In this regard, ICTD is presented as the solution for all problems, ranging from illiteracy to civil war (ITA, 2003: para. 5). Furthermore, according to the ITA (2003: para. 5), ICT investment is depicted as a ‘solution to the debt problems of developing countries’. By using the strategy of establishing causation, the texts claim that ICTs are positively correlated with development and wealth creation (WSIS, 2003: para. 33). Establishing a positive correlation is reminiscent of diffusion, whereby an innovation was thought to induce development (Rogers, 1995). Another important policy strategy adopted in the texts is the use of the trope of an ‘opportunity’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 8), presented to the global South for its advancement. It is therefore assumed that no nation will want to be an ‘outcast’ (ITA, 2003: 2; WSIS, 2003: 5) in the IS.

In keeping with neoliberal tenets of global market integration, development has been associated with increased private sector participation (WSIS, 2005: para. 49b; Giddens, 1999). The WSIS deliberations also involved private sector representatives. But as discussed earlier, governments were attributed a central role. Therefore, governments were invited to ‘intervene to correct market failures, to maintain fair competition, to attract investment,



[and] to enhance the development of the ICT infrastructure and applications' (WSIS, 2003: para. 39). This presentation of the investment '(e)nabling environment' (WSIS, 2003: para. 38) is indicative of neoliberal economics which are considered to be the international norm.

### *Discourse of participation*

Having assumed a Foucauldian analytic framework, it would be inadequate to assume that power is solely exercised from above. The discourse of participation present in the WSIS texts is evidence of increasing global inclusivity, conveyed through the use of terms such as 'interdependence' and 'people-centred' (WSIS, 2005: para. 2) development. Information and knowledge are also depicted as fundamental rights that become justifications for ICT investment (WSIS, 2003: para. 4). This is yet another policy mechanism employed by the WSIS, in using the human rights argument to appeal to developing countries. If something is considered a basic right, this validates the enactment of the Summit's recommendations (see for instance WSIS, 2005: para. 18; WSIS, 2003: para. 3 and 4). In this regard, ICTs are presented as a necessary condition for development.

Parallels can be drawn between Foucault's conception of 'resistance' and Giddens' understanding of 'agency'. The discourse of participation can be considered to mirror Giddens' (1984: 9) conception of 'agency' in that it refers to the 'capability' of doing things. But the fact that the ITU-sanctioned text is a means through which the discourse of participation is articulated reveals the underlying importance of 'structure'. The institutional structure can also limit participation of agents. An instance of this was when the media was denied the status of observer at WSIS proceedings, based on votes cast at the outset of the Geneva Summit. This is illustrative of what Giddens (1984: 15) calls "mobilization of bias" built into institutions', as governments were privileged over other actors.

By addressing the 'World Community' (ITA, 2003: 2), the texts attempt to tide over social-structural differences. Appealing to international solidarity for achieving UN-prescribed development goals can be seen as yet another policy strategy for leveraging global support for ICTD. There is an articulated need for a new type of partnership and cooperation between governments and people. For achieving this democratising objective, the solutions have mainly been presented in the form of North-South trade, technological development and transfer (e.g., WSIS, 2005: para. 31 and 12; WSIS, 2003: para. 33 and 60).

## **Socio-historic Discursive Context**

### *The investment enabling environment and North-South relations*

According to the WSIS (2003: para. 22), new media ICT investment is thought to accelerate ‘social and economic progress’. An investment enabling environment informed by neoliberalism is evoked for actualising this. For instance, the encouragement of policies for market ‘stability, predictability and fair competition’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 23). In this respect, ICTs are presented as having a ‘fundamental role’ (WSIS, 2005: para. 12) for furthering economic growth. The texts use the policy-strategy of establishing causation for justifying ICT investment. Simply put, an ICT revolution is causally connected with higher levels of development (WSIS, 2005: para. 12).

ICTs have been shown to have a transformative potential as they positively impact people’s ‘activities, interaction and lives’ (WSIS, 2005: para. 5). In this context, ICT and development are positively correlated, evoking the modernisation paradigm (see for instance WSIS, 2003: para. 8). By prescribing a developmental path converging toward ICT, social and structural differences between developed and developing nations are not given in-depth consideration. What remains unacknowledged is that free trade could potentially ‘undermine a local subsistence economy’ (Giddens, 1999: 17).

A market environment that facilitates competition through increased private sector participation is encouraged (see for instance WSIS, 2003: para. 39). However, the texts problematically equate a free trade environment with a non-discriminatory market (ITA, 2003: para. 5; WSIS, 2003: para. 40). This premise assumes that ‘free’ markets are not inflected with the interests of different actors and benefit everyone equally. The implication is that the recommendations adopt a prescriptive tone for encouraging policies in consonance with neoliberalism; such as an investment environment supportive of technological transfer, foreign direct investment and international financial cooperation (see for instance WSIS, 2003: para. 40).

The investment enabling environment is informed by neoliberal characteristics such as the ‘free’ market and the relaxation of trading barriers for reinforcing ‘global solidarity’ (WSIS, 2005: para. 51; WSIS, 2003: para. 67). This carries echoes of the Bretton Woods (economic) system which assumed that global integration of regional markets required privatisation and liberalisation. In this respect, the connection between the economy and the IS becomes relevant. The WSIS texts establish a relationship between the two by isolating ICTD as a

prerequisite for progress. The ITA (2003: para. 1) text advances this connection, and makes the economy and the IS terms that are interchangeable with one another.

The sharing of technology is depicted as an 'assistive' process (WSIS, 2003: para. 25). However, the texts refer to 'North-South flows and South-South cooperation' (WSIS, 2005: para. 19), giving rise to the question of perpetuation of dependency relations. Nowhere is there a mention of 'South-South flows'. The WSIS Report (2005: para. 20) mention trade, but in conjunction with 'partnership'. Contradictorily, the flows are depicted from the North to the South, without considering reciprocity. Similarly, the texts propose North-South aid-flows are necessary for achieving global 'stability' and 'harmony' (WSIS, 2005: para. 15; ITA, 2003: para. 5). Aid is no longer couched as 'philanthropy', but for furthering the 'survival' (ITA, 2003: para. 5) of developing nations. This argument gains strength when it is presented in a humanitarian context, as a benevolent duty of countries in the global North.

#### *Representation of the 'digital divide'*

The bridging of the 'digital divide' is presented as a vital opportunity not to be missed by developing countries (WSIS, 2005: para. 5 and 18; WSIS, 2003: para. 2). Despite the call to invest in infrastructure, services and capacity building; technological investment is given much emphasis (WSIS, 2005: para. 54; WSIS, 2003: para. 23 and 40). A concern linked to the 'digital divide' is that economically advanced countries leading the technological revolution may be able maintain their edge in the future, while less well-off countries may fail to catch up (Norris, 2001: 5). The central place attributed to technology in the development process evokes the modernisation paradigm and there is a limited acknowledgment of a multiplicity of developmental paths.

ICTs are depicted as prerequisites for the 'creation of wealth' (WSIS, 2003: para. 33). Therefore, the logic is that no nation would wish to be excluded from the IS as an 'outcast' (ITA, 2003: 2). This is an important discursive intersection between the WSIS and the ITA, as ICTD has been presented as a viable solution for bridging the 'digital divide'. As further evidence of this, the number of times ICTD occurred was counted in the textual sample. The findings indicated that at least 50% of the WSIS and ITA recommendations were directly concerned with ICTD, affirming that it is the dominant discourse (see Appendix 1.3).

As a frequently mentioned term, ICT also possesses a qualitative significance for bridging the digital divide. The WSIS (2003: para. 1 and 19) text depicts the 'digital divide' as a 'global challenge' and a 'quest', making ICTD an international developmental mission. ICTs are thereby given a historically significant role, in that they are thought to benefit future

generations (WSIS, 2003: para. 64). Despite acknowledging the need for a ‘diversity of media ownership’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 55), the concerns of West-centric information monopolies remain unaddressed. The texts presume that information-communication inequalities will be bridged by the impartial nature of the global market (see for instance ITA, 2003: para. 5; WSIS, 2003: para. 33). This implies that the free market is not governed by individual interests, but by arbitrary mechanisms that do not work to any actor’s disadvantage. In order to assert the unbiased quality of the market, the ITA (2003: para. 5) states that the ‘digital divide’ is not caused by a ‘malicious’ intent of developed countries. In this context, the role of traditional media for bridging the divide requires further investigation.

The WSIS deems the media as having an ‘essential role’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 24) in the IS. Elsewhere, the text refers to the ‘supportive role’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 55) of new media with reference to broader ICTD objectives. The ITA (2003: para. 5) too echoes this premise by discussing the ‘information support’ provided by mass media in the IS. Norris (1995: 6) observed that global flows of traditional media are characteristic of ‘centre-periphery inequalities’, with information mainly moving in the North-South direction. Though the WSIS (2003: para. 24g) exhorts traditional media to ‘bridge the knowledge divide’, the ‘Declaration of Principles’ is directed at developing new media infrastructure and capacity building. This is evidenced by the textual space attributed to traditional media development, limited to only two clauses in the Summit Reports.

Norris (2001: 4) conceives of the ‘global divide’ as the ‘divergence of Internet access between industrialised and developing societies’. It appears that the ITA (2003: para. 4) uses the term ‘global divide’ interchangeably with the ‘digital divide’. This throws into question whether traditional media is given due consideration in the recommendations. While the WSIS (2005: para. 20) aligns aid with partnership, the ITA (2003: para. 5) explicitly mentions the need for ‘large-scale and purposeful aid’ for developing media. The directionality of aid requires mention, i.e. from the North to the South, drawing attention to a dependency situation yet again (ITA, 2003: para. 5). Despite the mention of ‘international imbalances’ (WSIS, 2003: para. 55) in information-communication that impacts the media, there are few suggestions for overcoming these divides outside of ‘partnerships’ for facilitating trade and technology transfer. In the WSIS (2003: para. 23c) context, ICTD is mainly oriented towards new media. Traditional ICTs on the other hand, are allocated a supportive role in a national context (WSIS, 2005: para. 20).

The WSIS (2005: 90n) recommendations are concerned with combining the uses of traditional and new media to provide everyone with ‘universal access to information, culture

and knowledge'. Compared to the Geneva Report, the Tunis Report dedicates a longer subsection to the media. However, concerns of media plurality and freedom of expression are inflected by the discourse of development. For instance, through encouraging media professionals from developing countries to forge 'partnerships' and 'networks' with developed nations (WSIS, 2003: para. 24d). The flows of information, communication and finances are seemingly from the North to the South, without adequate attention to the reverse situation. Therefore, though the discourse of participation is evoked, the question of dependency is still prominent.

According to the WSIS (2003: para. D2c), ICTD will help in creating 'debt relief mechanisms' by cancelling out 'unsustainable debt burdens' and 'outstanding indebtedness'. These mechanisms are thought to provide a 'durable solution' (WSIS, 2005: para. 31) for debt problems. The recommendations emphasise the need for urgent economic and technological aid provision to developing countries from those which are developed (WSIS, 2005: para. 20; ITA, 2003: para. 5). In this regard, the economic environment is presented as an 'extremely heterogeneous structure' (ITA, 2003: para. 4), characterised by 'complexity' (WSIS, 2005: para. B5). The economic system is depicted as that which is neutral, driven by market forces. This belies the precedence given to developed countries for assisting developing nations through finance or technological/professional expertise.

#### *The Digital Solidarity Fund*

The Tunis Summit (2005: para. 11) proposed mechanisms for bridging the digital divide to achieve 'internationally agreed development goals'. The presentation of the DSF provides another instance of discursive conflict in the WSIS. The text makes a case for the provision of financial assistance through 'cooperation' (WSIS, 2003: para. 31). However, the opportunity to bridge the digital divide is mainly possible through market forces in conjunction with assistance from developed countries, i.e. 'North-South flows' (WSIS, 2005: para. 19). In addition, WSIS (2005: para. 19) recommendations advocate increased participation by multilaterals for providing finances to developing countries. The possible conditionality of these loans remains unmentioned.

The WSIS discourse discusses the DSF using the policy-technique of striking a bargain. There is a call to align trade with aid, so that developing country markets open more rapidly under neoliberal conditions (WSIS, 2005: para. 31; ITA, 2003: para. 7; WSIS, 2003: para. 28b). In this respect, references to 'debt swapping' and 'cancellation' (WSIS, 2005: para. 27l) are

reminiscent of the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).<sup>10</sup> The provision of financial and/or technical aid is seen to help developing countries prolong their 'survival' (ITA, 2003: para. 5), thereby depicting aid provision as an imperative duty of developed nations. Additionally, though the texts acknowledge special funding needs would be incorporated while dispensing finances for ICTD, the basis upon which this deduction is made has not been provided (WSIS, 2005: para. 11).

Investments in ICTs have been validated by depicting how they enhance possibilities for developing countries. The benefits are presented as those which are economic, followed by spill-over social impacts (WSIS, 2003: para. 9). By presenting ICT as the panacea for all problems, national or global, it becomes an international developmental goal that all nations should strive toward. However, the conditions under which this must come about are seemingly neoliberal, as the texts detail a need for a pro-competitive, free market environment conducive for global trade and development (WSIS, 2005: para. 27). The impact upon countries with differing economic situations is not discussed in detail. Though there is an acknowledgement of 'national realities' (WSIS, 2005: para. 16), this is treated briefly through a singular clause in the recommendations.

For achieving global participation, the WSIS texts assert the importance of international cooperation. It is paradoxical that the objective of this cooperation is to further competition through liberalisation and privatisation. What adds to the complexity of the situation is the linkage between trade and aid, as the WSIS and ITA texts refer to how both can be used in conjunction to further development. By using the policy technique of establishing conditionality, the texts appeal to developing countries for investing in ICTs in order to free themselves of debt burdens.

### *Progress measurement indices*

For the provision of financial/technical aid and reviewing implemented projects, the ICT-OI and the DOI were brought into being. Both indices seek to measure the progress of the IS and the 'digital divide' (ITU online, n.d.). The policy technique of 'numbering' (Apthorpe, 1996) becomes significant as statistics can be used to justify investing in a developing country. If the DOI is studied, or core indicators of the ICT-OI are examined, funding may only be channelled into new media ICTD. This is because their statistical outcomes

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<sup>10</sup> SAPs were 'a World Bank instrument prevalent in the 1980s that focused on correcting the major macroeconomic distortions hindering development' (OECD online, n.d.). These programmes were characterised by an emphasis on the free market and supply-side reforms.

overwhelmingly focus upon new media (see Appendix 1.2). This will have major ramifications for media development in developing countries (ITU, 2003: 6).

I proceed to isolate the indicators in these indices and discuss them in the WSIS context. The DOI provides a 'diagnostic perspective' (Jensen and Mahan, 2008: 5) on existing and emerging technologies, and measures ICT availability and opportunity for usage. It also assesses differing levels of access to information and communication in an economy (ITU, 2005: 26). An examination of DOI indicators revealed that the statistics were based on the proportion of the population with access to technology, infrastructural provision, followed by its utilisation. The ICTs considered are mobile telephony, broadband, Internet and computers. Missing in this list are broadcast media (eg., television, radio), deemed to be more 'traditional' ICT forms in the WSIS. This is an instance of privileging new media ICTD.

The WSIS (2005: para. 115) discourse mentions measurement indices that utilise a 'common set of *core* ICT indicators' (emphasis mine). Applying this statement to the above elaboration of the variables constituting the ICT-OI and the DOI, the WSIS text focuses on 'core' indicators that exclude 'traditional' media forms. WSIS (2005: para. 116) recommendations also mention the ability of indices to take into account developmental differences and individual circumstances of nations. However, national differences cannot be easily incorporated by using a singular statistical indicator for measuring ICT progress.

The ICT-OI provides a comparative perspective on ICTD and the digital divide at an international level (Jensen and Mahan, 2003: 5). It is based on 'core' (WSIS, 2005: para. 114a) indicators, central to measuring the IS. Similar to the DOI, this index relies primarily upon new media ICTs for generating statistics. A marked difference is that it also incorporates an 'extended core', which includes television equipped households per hundred. Notably, cable TV subscriptions, radio-related indicators and print media in its entirety are unmentioned by both indices. Additionally, the number of new media core indicators far exceeds those that constitute the traditional media extended core indicators, and will therefore have a greater contribution to any statistical data so generated.

#### *Presentation of the network environment - revisiting Habermas' conception of the public sphere*

An interesting observation emerged as a by-product of the DA. The texts conceptualise an emergent public sphere (PS) centred on ICT. The PS, as Habermas (1989/1992) conceived it, was a space characterised by communication on a face-to-face basis. However, for Habermas

(1992: 171), mass-mediated communications driven by electronic media gave rise to a 'public sphere in appearance only'. The WSIS attempts to reverse this conception by using new media ICTs as the basis of a global PS. Using the metaphor of construction, 'building' (see for instance WSIS, 2003: para. 13) a new PS based on ICT becomes a significant enterprise. In the WSIS (2003: para. 26) context, ICTs are presented the means to preserve, transmit and develop cultural heritage, scientific progress, means of communication and economic growth.

Habermas' (1989/1992: 171) chief contention with mass mediated communication was its ability to sustain a one-way flow of information to a recipient public. Echoes of the discourse of diffusion can be observed here, in that information was disseminated through mass media channels for affecting behavioural change (Rogers, 1964). Interestingly enough, the WSIS (2003: para. 26) discourse emphasises a 'public domain' driven by new media ICTs. But this permeation of ICTs into all realms of life requires a significant degree of participation. On this point, there is a marked divergence from Habermas' understanding of mass media, because he views the electronic media as that which employs diffusion but does not encourage participation due to a unidirectional information flow. In the WSIS context, the two competing discourses are diffusion and participation. This gives rise to a complex dialectical situation induced by discursive conflict.

In using ICTs as the focal point for a new PS, a point to consider is its viability. Habermas' (1989/1992) PS relied upon communicatory exchange under an 'ideal speech situation'. When considering the case of ICTs, in order to allow for an exchange between countries, a basic level of 'capability' (Hancock as cited in Servaes, 1999: 169) is required in the recipient. In some country cases, especially in the developing world, capacity building is also needed after technological and infrastructural investment. What indeed could be the 'ideal speech situation' when adapted to an ICT-mediated environment? Would it be technological availability and proliferation, or possibly education in the utilisation of technology? Or perhaps, and more plausibly, a mix of both.

Habermas' speech condition is 'ideal' because it assumes that speakers have an equal chance to participate in dialogue. In the WSIS context, the 'digital divide' is indicative of an acknowledgement of possible North-South developmental differences. However, in prescribing the same solution (i.e., ICTD) for all problems, social-structural variations are not fully considered. As the analysis indicates, technological diffusion is central to conceiving a new PS premised upon ICTs. The discourse of participation is used to make a case for inclusive development. The simultaneous importance given to diffusion, through North-



South trade and technological dissemination, is evidence of the discursive clash that informs the WSIS texts.

### **The Dialectics of Participation and Diffusion**

A parallel can be drawn between what Giddens calls ‘micro-experience’ and the Foucauldian concept of ‘micro physics of power’, in that social reality is a resultant of discursive construction. Though the discourse of participation is vital in the WSIS context, it is consistently countered by that of diffusion through recurrent themes of North-South trade and technological transfer prescribed for bridging the digital divide. The discursive dominance is less explicit in the WSIS context as compared to the ITA, but it is evident after conducting a DA. The ITA privileges a discourse of diffusion as it deems North-South economic and technical assistance as the sole solution for bridging the digital divide (ITA, 2003: para. 5).

The duality of ‘structure’ is such that the resources which are (re)produced are the means of reproducing the ‘system’ (Giddens, 1984: 19). This is in consonance with the finding that there is indeed a discursive clash between participation and diffusion in the WSIS. ICTD has been identified as the dominant discourse, since it is the locus for all points of deliberation. In this regard, ‘structure’, for Giddens, not only refers to rules that govern social systems but also to its resources. Therefore, the presentation of ICT as an international developmental goal is important. But power is inevitably exercised by those who control resources, where ‘control’ refers to the capability that some actors have for ‘influencing the circumstances of action of others’ (Giddens, 1984: 283). This is because, for Giddens (1984: 283), international trade and development depends on a supporting ‘framework of institutions’. In this context, these include UN agencies, multilateral lending bodies and powerful participant member states.

In struggles for power, the ‘dialectic of control’ is always in operation (Giddens, 1984). There are instances of counter-power, or resistance in Foucauldian terms, when ‘agency’ comes to the forefront. This is mainly through the inclusion of the global South in policy deliberations. Therefore, ‘structure’ is not only constraining but also enabling. In this respect, though Giddens (1984: 7) focuses upon ‘I’ as the agent, we may consider the strength of ‘we’ in WSIS discourse. The collective does convey a greater potential to influence the agenda. However, as is revealed by the analysis, this is undermined by the primacy WSIS discourse attributes to North-South flows.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research question of this study was – *Is there evidence of a consistently dominant discourse in international debates about the links between the network environment and development?* Using the WSIS as a case study, the findings affirmed that ICTD is the dominant discourse. The discourse analysis also revealed a clash between the discourses of participation and diffusion. On a textual level, participation was central for informing the text. However, at the interdiscursive and socio-historic level, the main focus appeared to be diffusion through trade and technological transfer in an increasingly neoliberal economic environment. The discourses echo aspects of the ‘dominant paradigm’. Therefore, it was deduced that WSIS discourse is mainly informed by a diffusionist approach couched in the language of participation. This was, at times, challenging to ascertain. However, sufficient evidence was gathered by conducting a detailed analysis on the textual sample using a specially devised methodology.

In order to increase the methodological rigour of this study, Foucault’s discourse analysis approach was combined with Aphorpe’s (1996) three-dimensional discourse analytic technique. Employing both methods allowed for an in-depth study of policy strategies for generating consensus through deliberations. Examining these strategies were insightful for understanding how the texts contribute to the creation of ‘truths’, by presenting the IS in particular ways. In this regard, the selection of the sample also allowed for the deduction that neoliberal influences of WSIS discourse permeate into those produced by independent participants at the Summit, such as the ITA. This is evidence of how the WSIS discourse could potentially impact that of other media and communications organisations on a micro-level. On a macro-level, it can also influence policy-making, as UN deliberations often serve as legislative guidelines in developing countries. This pre-empts a discursive clash between diffusion and participation at the interdiscursive level.

In terms of directions for further research, suggestions for how to realise a more inclusive form of participation geared toward self-sufficiency would be useful. Though the WSIS adopted a multi-stakeholder model, much progress is still required for ensuring equal participation by all actors (Padovani, 2005b). In addition, as was revealed by the analysis, the possibility of a public sphere based on ICTs is important to consider. The conditions under which an ICT-centric PS is possible will also be interesting to study.

Concerns of traditional media development in comparison to ICTD are also vital points for further study. As the study ascertained, since ICTD is indeed the dominant discourse in the

WSIS context, the implications for traditional media development will be substantial in the forthcoming years. Whether the term 'digital divide' is inclusive enough to incorporate traditional media is an area that requires further exploration. This is directly related to poverty in information-communication resources and capability, in that developmental divides may be exacerbated if the emphasis is mainly upon technological transfer, without focussing upon the dynamic nature of communication processes.

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## APPENDIX

### 1.1 Adapted methodological approach

Criteria	Adapted Foucauldian (1972) approach to discourse analysis <sup>11</sup>	Apthorpe's (1996) three-dimensional development policy discourse analysis	Key intersections between Foucault and Apthorpe
Grammatical analysis <sup>12</sup>	Micro-power: Operation of power through discursive statements or what Foucault calls 'énoncé'. <sup>13</sup> How grammar itself is governed by rules, as are academic disciplines. Therefore, this conception is not limited to sentences alone and even extends to acts of 'naming', such as through the use of classificatory schemes (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 37).	Structure: Linguistic tools oriented toward consensus-building, conveyed through the wording of the text.	Grammatical structures contribute to the creation of discourse/s in the texts.
Interdiscursive analysis <sup>14</sup>	Intertextual dependency: Complex relationships between different discourses contributing to the creation of other discourse/s. <sup>15</sup> Dependencies that exist within and between discourses that can be	Function: Distribution of power through the text/s, especially by employing various policy construction strategies; such as the use of logic and justification in the	The process of how 'norms' are deliberately constructed in policy recommendations. <sup>16</sup> The role of institutions in preserving and maintaining power and their relations with other

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<sup>11</sup> Discursive formations in Foucauldian (1972: 32) terms are 'statements different in form and, dispersed in time, [that] form a group if they refer to one and the same object'.

<sup>12</sup> Refers to how different grammatical structures may be employed (Foucault, 1972: 61).

<sup>13</sup> 'Énoncé', for Foucault (1972), is the statement which facilitates utterances, speech-acts or propositions that are meaningful (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 37).

<sup>14</sup> Dependence between statements is possible when they possess a common schematic basis, giving rise to coexistence between multiple discourses (Foucault, 1972: 57). This is not always harmonious as 'interference' (Foucault, 1972: 59) may take place between discourses in the text.

<sup>15</sup> 'Points of diffraction of discourse' (Foucault, 1972: 65) are particularly relevant, in that two concepts appear in the same discursive formation without being able to enter the same series of statements.

<sup>16</sup> Validity is created through the use of grammar, which contributes to the creation of normativity through its ability to assume 'truth' (Foucault, 1972: 61).



	connected in a wider socio-historical context (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 48).	texts.	actors in the policy deliberation process. Acknowledging the possibility of resistance.
Providing discourse with a socio-historical context <sup>17</sup>	Macro-power: How micro-power is replicated and enacted in a global context. Strategies of how power operates; particularly through the process of 'normalisation' of particular official knowledges. These contribute to the creation of certain 'truths'.	Performance: the enactment of power through discourse, particularly conveyed through policy guidelines, that potentially impact society. Speech, as it is presented in the text, as a means of communication.	How 'knowledge' contributes to the creation of universal, irrefutable 'truths'. <sup>18</sup>

**Source:** Compiled by author drawing upon Aphorpe (1996) and Foucault (1972).

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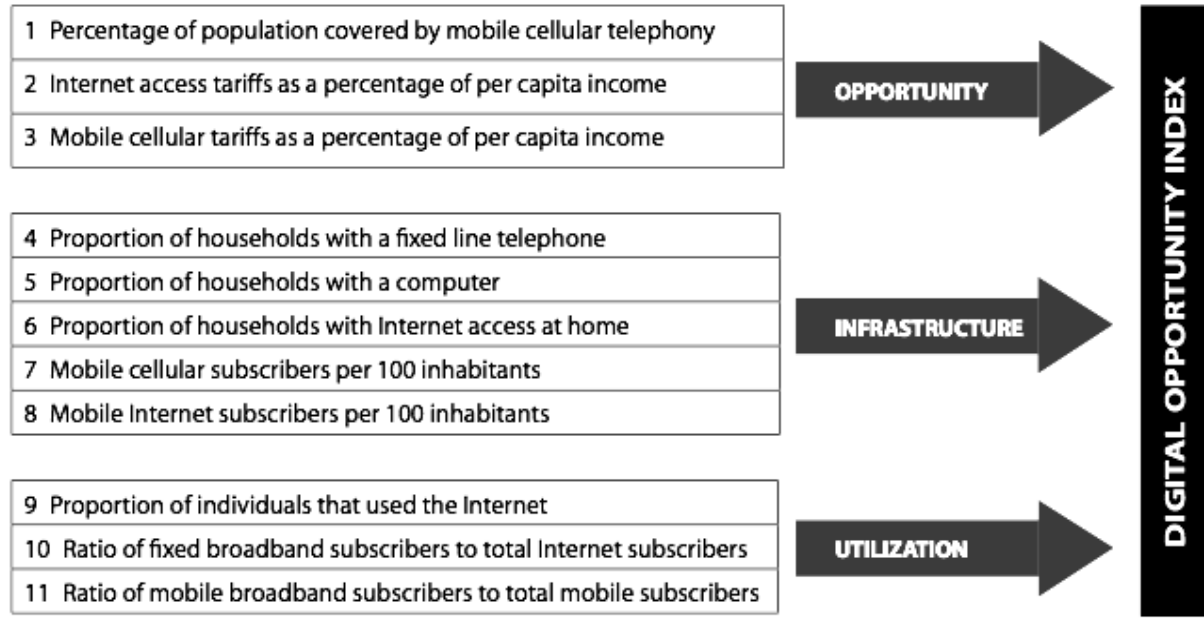
<sup>17</sup> Discursive unities are the rules that define discursive objects, their transformations and even the lack of continuity between them (Foucault, 1979: 33). These can be unified when they deal with (a) particular subject/s and possess a certain historical context. When such is the case, these unities contribute to a 'discursive formation'.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault does not endeavour to provide *the* truth through his analysis (McHoul and Grace, 1993: 25). He acknowledges there may be multiple truths. But the key aspect is that certain truths are more dominant than others, and this requires exploration.

## 1.2 Progress Measurement Indices

### 1.2.1 Constituent Variables of the Digital Opportunity Index

**Figure 3.1e: Structure of the Digital Opportunity Index**



*Note:* The indicators are averaged within each category and categories are averaged to obtain the Digital Opportunity Index value.

Source: ITU/UNCTAD/KADO Digital Opportunity Platform.

Source: International Telecommunication Union and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2007). *World Information Society 2007 Report: Beyond WSIS*. URL: [http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2007/WISR07\\_full-free.pdf](http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2007/WISR07_full-free.pdf) [Last consulted August 22, 2012]

### 1.2.2 Constituent Variables of the ICT-Opportunity Index

**Table 7.1: ICT Opportunity Index: a total of 10 indicators**

	<i>Indicator used</i>
<b>Info Density</b>	
Networks	a) Main telephone lines per 100 inhabitants b) Mobile cellular subscribers per 100 inhabitants c) International internet bandwidth (kbps per inhabitant)
Skills	a) Adult literacy rates b) Gross enrolment rates - primary - secondary - tertiary (Source: UNESCO)
<b>Info use</b>	
Uptake	a) Internet users per 100 inhabitants b) Proportion of households with a TV c) Computers per 100 inhabitants
Intensity	a) Total broadband internet subscribers per 100 inhabitants b) International outgoing telephone traffic (minutes) per capita

Source: ITU.

Source: International Telecommunication Union and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2007). *World Information Society 2007 Report: Beyond WSIS*. URL: [http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2007/WISRo7\\_full-free.pdf](http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/publications/worldinformationsociety/2007/WISRo7_full-free.pdf) [Last consulted August 22, 2012]

**1.3 The frequency with which ICTD and ICT in connection with its development (e.g., provision of more Network Access Points) is mentioned in the textual sample**

Summit document →	ITA 2003 Position Paper on the Global Information Society	WSIS 2003 Declaration of Principles	WSIS 2005 Declaration of Principles
Paragraph/postulate number which mention ICTD and/or ICT in connection with its development →	2, 4, 6, 7	2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 19, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 47, 51, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64	5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 36
Percentage in the text →	Postulates which mention ICT/ICT- related aspects: 4 Total number of postulates: 7  Percentage in the text 4/7 => 57.14%	Recommendations which mention ICT/ICT-related aspects: 35 Total number of recommendations: 67  Percentage in the text 35/67 => 52.23%	Recommendations which mention ICT/ICT- related aspects: 20 Total number of recommendations: 40  Percentage in the text 20/40 => 50%

Source: Created by author.

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