A Brief Descriptive Glossary of Communication and Information (Aimed at Providing Clarification and Improving Mutual Understanding)[1]

Antonio Pasquali

Abstract

This glossary was put together in response to an increasing technological and linguistic Tower of Babel effect in the communications field. It offers an initial filtering of the terminology based on a re-examination of information and communication "basics".

The first term, the notion of human relations, signifies a phenomenon that is ontologically impossible in the absence of the communicating act, and the quality of which is a reflection of the model of communication governing it. The chapter examines the following terms: deontologies, morals and ethics, which are reassigned their true meanings, underlining the inherence of "moral" and "communication", and of "intersubjectivity" and "society". Inform and communicate are concepts that can be derived by schematization from the group of relational categories in order to bring out the vertical, causative, desocializing and imperfect nature of the former, and the synthetic, reciprocal, socializing and perfect nature of the latter, demonstrating that "inform" should be conceived of from the perspective of "communicate", and not the reverse. This thinking lays a foundation for the full legitimacy and precedence of communication rights, whose areas of application are described.

The chapter also discusses the aspect of these rights that provokes the most conflict today—the vicarious exercise of them—in order to demonstrate the need for new social contracts in this area. The term free flow of information, an essentially positive concept, though often improperly applied, needs to be recovered, because many current controversies reproduce old and unresolved diatribes regarding information in its other senses. The two antonymous terms access and participation are identifiable in communicational terms as "receiving" and "transmitting" of messages. These two notions, of great strategic importance, are often distorted, if not manipulated. Finally, the term information society is a triumphalist nickname used to legitimize the repudiation of better and more peaceful human relations that are

[1] Translated from the Spanish original by Paul Keller.

expressed in a communication society. Considering the information society in its current phase, the chapter criticizes its evident anomy, the abuses of dominant positions that plague it, its addiction to espionage and its criminal economic record.

Rationale

The following explanations of basic communication and information terms are intended as an *aide-mémoire*, to help people from different cultural backgrounds keep core concepts in focus and understand each other. These explanations do not constitute definitions, nor do they favour one system of hermeneutics over another. Rather, they provide a frame of reference to prevent misunderstandings. Our pocket vocabulary begins with the concept of "human relations". While the essential importance of this endeavour may not be immediately apparent, it is, in fact, the *raison d'être* of the communicative and informative process.

It has not been easy for the young communication and information sciences—or disciplines—to create their own vocabulary, given the brisk pace at which their applications are changing. They have been forced to borrow terms from other branches of knowledge to express essential concepts, and these terms are laden with prior meaning. The pre-existing meanings themselves are not always unequivocal, coming, as they do, from varying linguistic and cultural contexts from which different connotations arise. The Tower of Babel phenomenon, in which the relationship between signifier and signified becomes problematic, is thus more frequent in our field than we might wish.

Numerous international debates in the 1970s and 1980s, regarding "the free flow of information", for instance, proved in the end to be dialogues of the deaf because their participants, often without realizing it, had distinct, and indeed divergent, notions of information and of freedom in particular. Although they used the same words, they had different concepts in mind. Today, the supposed need to control information for security reasons is presented in the guise of anodyne clichés, such as information security and network security—vague terms used to avoid calling massive interception of messages by its real name—espionage.

The polysemy of important terms such as information and access continues to create problems, and it would have been wise for the secretariat of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to produce, in advance, an agreed terminological glossary to be distributed to prospective meeting participants in order to reduce semantic confusion. The very definition of information favoured by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is not shared by other

intergovernmental agencies, information technology specialists or news professionals.

The proliferation of communication channels and of digitization, globalization and instantaneous electronic messaging, the increasing economic, military, political and cultural weight of information and communication processes, and interminable changes in production, conservation, dissemination, vectors, coding and monitoring of messages make information and communication ever more complex. The Tower of Babel effect grows, while the capability for semantic manipulation increases concomitantly. The following reflections attempt to contribute to terminological clarity, promote mutual understanding and facilitate comprehension of what we truly wish to say to each other in our dialogue about communication and information.

Human Relations

Improving human relations (in the basic, not the management, sense of the term) is the ultimate practical aim of the social sciences. However, this governing concept is not invoked as often as might be desired, and hence, though WSIS, as a forum for humanity, is intended to impact certain parameters of human relations considered essential today, it is not surprising that the term does not figure in the organization's final documents, with the exception of a brief mention in one or more of the "considering that" clauses.

The concept of relation is one of a small number of logically indefinable concepts in the empyrean of thought. Knowledge itself is the fruit of a proper relation between understanding and things. Western schools of philosophy have placed relation among the dozen higher concepts called "categories", and have dedicated themselves, in a descending process of structural schematization, to ordering the different compartments used to divide the whole, based on the manner in which relation manifests itself in each.

From the start, the human microcosm is perceived as the realm of the highest attained relationship. The human being is superior to all other beings, and even godlike, because humans are the only ones capable of relating consciously with their fellows and of creating community. The way in which relation manifests itself among rational beings is called *koinonía* (in Greek) or *communitas* (in Latin). It is inspiring, even today, to contemplate the first Western thinker who explored the problem. It is to Democritus of Abdera, in the fifth century B.C., that we owe the insight that it was the invention of communicative language which turned hominids into humans. Democritus declared that without communication, we would never have transcended the brute state of copresence that we shared with the animals, to move toward a

state of coexistence, in which the other becomes a neighbour with whom we coexist, and in which we reach the only fully conscious form of relationship, namely, community. Twenty-six centuries ago, Democritus stated that there can be no community without communication. Happily, almost every modern language has preserved the verbal root *kóinos* (common) or *communis*, *communitas*, *communicatio*, reminding us forever of the inherence of communication and community.

If it is true that without the communicative function there is no community, then any change in the communicative behaviour of a social group will produce changes in ways of perceiving, feeling and treating the other in the context of practical human relationship, within the framework of the model of community in force. The words communication or information always, and necessarily, refer to the essence of community and human relations. Thus, it is unacceptable to reduce these terms to the level of a technical or economic discourse that seeks to minimize or devalue the social repercussions of the communicating *factum*. Hence, society has an inalienable ontological right to view, and participate in, any decision that affects its communication or information—activities that constitute the essence of human relations.

The world order today favours political and economic interests that seek to steer social change by controlling communication and information. The international community is opposing this abuse with increasing clarity, posing the question of who is really to exercise authority in communications—the most essential function of human coexistence.

The statement that any society is a reflection of its communication networks is not ideological, but it makes ideologically suspect any attempt to favour sterile and desocialized communication and information discourses, in which terminology is reduced to its semiological, scientific/technical or commercial dimensions.

We are living through a historical transition in which much decision-making power is deliberately being removed from consensual bodies—generally within the United Nations family of organizations—and placed in new centres of power. There has been a constant attempt, for decades, to discredit and block the United Nations ("Not a good idea poorly applied, but simply a bad idea," argued the *Washington Post* in March 2003), and to replace it by a more malleable parallel system. In the new club of mega-powers—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Group of Eight (G-8), whose areas of authority are constantly expanding—the generous multilateral principle of "one country, one vote" is replaced by a management system based on weighted voting. (In the IMF, the wealthiest country's vote has 1,322 times the weight of that of the

poorest.) Issues such as intellectual property and asbestosis are now WTO matters, and water—believe it or not—has become a matter for the World Bank. Much deliberative activity related to communication and information has also been compelled to migrate to bodies that are less and less intergovernmental in nature—more docile, privatized or inclined to favour technological and economic, rather than social, approaches to issues. What the interested parties gain in these relocations, civil society tends to lose in morale and social cohesion. The forced migration to the ITU of the major issue of communication, reduced to the sub-chapter of information, is obviously one of these cases. The ITU defines itself as an "organization specializing in information and communication technologies" (that is, specializing in hardware) and, among UN organizations, it is perhaps the most advanced in the privatization process, with 189 member states, 660 private sector members and not a single organization representing civil society. (Its unprecedented and important Reform Advisory Panel, or RAP, formed in Minneapolis, includes the International Chamber of Commerce, Cisco, AT&T and Nortel, and the list of its "guests" includes WorldCom, Global Crossing, Qwest, AOL Time Warner and Xerox, some of which have disappeared or declared bankruptcy.) Meanwhile, its official auditor was recommended to it by none other than Arthur Andersen. In March 2002, the "intergovernmental" ITU proudly announced, in Istanbul, that "the new telecommunications world is one that can be characterized as private, competitive, mobile and global". The Secretary-General of the United Nations has entrusted this organization (quite different from what it was when it published the hope-inspiring report of the Maitland Commission, *The Missing Link*, in 1985) with the task of organizing WSIS and with the mandate to "play a key role in it". Given the danger announced at its 2002 plenary session regarding major drops in contributions to its budget from countries in the North, perhaps the ITU is seeking to provide its RAP with satisfactory results. One can also imagine, among the future results of the summit, a package of ethereal statements that leaves the sector's macro realities untouched, or an astute reinvigoration of the giant industrial/commercial telecom beast, which is in a weakened state today due to catastrophic speculation in the Internet and in Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) frequencies. (During the PrepComs, the perception of a number of NGOs was that there was a tendency to turn the summit into an "Internet promotion".)

Ultimately, the scenarios cannot be predicted, but one fact may be taken for granted: While it discusses aid for development, funding, rights, broadcast frequencies, digitization, security, codes, access and the Internet, WSIS will fall into the behavioural patterns of the so-called information society, and thus pave the way for future decisions that, sooner or later, for better or worse, will change the community of human

beings. Those concerned about a teleology of more equitable relations among human beings, and who are struggling for a reasonably peaceful and unified human family, will resist all reductionism, and will continue to reflect on the results of WSIS, in terms of their effects on human relations.

Deontologies, Morals and Ethics

These terms are widely used in vague and ambiguous ways. Humanity's diminished moral vocabulary, overwhelmed today by glamorous technological and economic dictionaries whose vocabulary everyone tries to imitate, reveals a certain cacophony. The oft-heard call for an ethical and moral rescue fails, for example, to indicate what ethics or morals are. Is the idea to use ethics to improve the poor image associated with morals, or are we simply dealing with a verbal stereotype that people adopt unquestioningly because it sounds good? (Yesteryear's "global village" was such a phrase.) A minimum of terminological clarity is called for here, and in analysing communications, there are two reasons for clarifying terms of moral philosophy.

First, communication and morals are, anthropologically speaking, the two categories of relation with the greatest conceptual and historical links, since they both concern our treatment of the other. Once the human group found, in communication, the oxidant for its sociability, survival obliged it to ensure a minimum of harmony. It accomplished this through social contract. It provided itself with standards of behaviour to facilitate the process of coexistence. (This is why, for millennia, justice was considered the supreme moral virtue.) All subsequent standards grew out of an original moral plexus, and law systematically returns to it when confronted with unprecedented crisis. Communication is a moral act and an act of interpersonal relationship, as well as a political act and an act of social construction. Communication and standards of co-existence are two fundamental, essential and related ways by which people are linked in human relationship.

The second reason is that unprecedented communication rights, ensuring just and pluralistic distribution of the power to communicate, would not survive in the absence of a new communication morality, adopted by a majority of those subject to such relationship—more specifically, a new intersubjective morality conceived on the basis of higher standards of communicative and informative behaviour. Without such a new morality, it will be difficult to establish new communication law and policy, which are indispensable if today's common law rights—riddled, as they are, by authoritarian elements—are to be democratized. The meanings of three terms are therefore clarified, for possible use by WSIS.

Deontologies: This word needs to be revived in the moral discourse of all languages, in order to prevent various types of misunderstanding. Deontologies (or "professional morals") are consistent and specific sets of standards to promote self-regulation, self-esteem, good governance and respect for the beneficiaries of specific professional activities. They do not involve any provision for legal sanctions. They are normally reflected in deontological codes (of which the Hippocratic oath is the archetype). The frequently employed phrase "code of ethics" creates great confusion and should be abandoned. Deontologies can lend themselves to moral dishonesty when, in the name of group interests or freedoms, they attempt to remove the group from society's control, replacing it by a mere self-watchfulness. A world of praxis governed only by pure, contradictory and unsystematic sectoral deontologies or micro-level systems of standards would be a morally anarchical and politically Hobbesian one. Deontologies can provide useful and finer-toothed regulation of behaviour when they serve as sets of standards added to pre-existing moral and legal norms, based on external oversight. On the other hand, they can become an excuse when they attempt to elude existing norms and sidestep legal sanctions. In communications, this degraded version of the concept has prevailed.

Morals: Morals are consistent, generic, historical and systematizable sets of norms that are constantly evolving. For communities that share beliefs and principles, they provide axiological and practical criteria for all types of action. All human groups, without exception, are governed by unwritten or codified, simple or complex moral standards—a confirmation of the Cartesian principle that while survival without metaphysics is possible, survival without a coherent moral conception of the world is not. True moral systems are characterized by being systematic and non-contradictory, with some degree of hierarchy in their axiological structures. (A popular collection of proverbs with its diverse and contradictory moral proto-standards is not yet a system of morals.) The social morals cited in many constitutions express the fact that every society—national society, in this case—holds to one set of values and duties more than to others: what may be questionable or reprehensible for one system of social morals can be quite acceptable for another. Whether moral principles remain in force over time depends on their ability to provide norms of proper behaviour even in new situations. If they fail to do this, their credibility suffers and the social moral system begins to: (i) generate amoral responses to unfamiliar stimuli; or (ii) seek more inclusive principles that will make it possible to incorporate the new within the moral system. Science, technology and economics, which are experiencing a boisterous evolution, generate—and, today, may be said to favour—*amoral* behaviours (which are the first step on the short path to *demoralization* and *immorality*), rather than to promote

concerted searches for superior moral principles. In communication and information, this phenomenon is clearly evident: as deontological codes are used to avoid social responsibilities, technological wonders are cultivated in the search for amoral consensuses, in order to avoid the need for an obstructive examination of authority and content.

Ethics: This term should be reserved for moral philosophy, which is a metaphysical-gnoseological systematization of actual historical morals. (The Kantian definition—metaphysics of moral habits—is still faultless.) Ethics only begins when reason asks why are there moral principles; what supreme, universal and timeless principles are found in all moral systems; why are humans the only moral beings; and what is the origin of the great moral principles. Thus, ethics only exist in the form of coherent parts of some philosophical system. Any other use of the term is inappropriate and fosters confusion.

We speak correctly of the ethics of Hume or of the Frankfurt School, of the morals of the Greek people or of Nazism, and of the deontology of communicators or physicians. The term ethics, with occasional exceptions, should be reserved for philosophical conferences. Deontologies prove suspicious when their defenders are also the possessors of large extra-moral interests, but this term is the one to use—the only one—when referring to the morals of the communicator. Morality is in serious need of updating—conceptually and semantically—if its great principles are to avoid becoming inapplicable, which would pave the way for economic, military, political, scientific or technological principles to supplant them.

Informing and Communicating

In light of the very substantial progress of the communication media, modern science has been forced to rescue the term communication from disuse during the recent period of slightly more than a century. However, "progress" here does not refer to the generic proliferation of artificial channels and their quantitative growth in the industrial age, but rather, to three precisely defined phenomena that have qualitatively transformed human relations:

- the massive technical reproducibility of messages;
- the progressive irrelevance of spatial and temporal "distance" as a significant variable; and
- in these relocations, the preservation of what was previously unpreservable, such as sounds, static images and moving images.

It was neither the musical notation of Guido d'Arezzo nor Gutenberg's movable type that led to the dusting off of the generic term, communication. Rather, it was a chain of inventions such as daguerreotype, the rotary press, wire telegraphy, the phonograph and cinematography, that produced a qualitative change in human relations, beginning in the nineteenth century.

Information, on the other hand, can be traced from the classical era, where it thrived as a philosophical concept denoting the interpenetration or imposition of a form, idea or principle with or in material that thus becomes "in-formed" or "formed". Thus, for instance, marble becomes statue. (This old meaning is irreplaceable. It continues to help us understand modern relationships, such as that between news and public opinion). Then, for centuries, the use of the term information was nearly monopolized by journalists. In our time, the multiple meanings of information, in addition to the unresolved ambiguities of communicating and informing, create a certain Tower of Babel effect when there is an attempt to agree on a definition of the ideal ought-to-be of an information society. There is the information of informatics (the mathematically measurable quantum of unpredictability in the message), the information of cybernetics (the command signal that feeds into or provides feedback to programmed systems), the information of the telecommunication engineer (that which is digitizable/transmittable), the information of the defender of human rights and freedoms (any knowledge that is in the public domain and accessible), and the information of the journalist (essentially, the newsworthy). To add to the confusion, the venerable Reuter's describes itself on its homepage in the following terms: "Best known for our expertise in journalism, we are also one of the largest information providers in the world, with annual sales of £3.6 billion", doing away with the old equivalence of information and news, and making information a synonym of "economic bulletin". WSIS's hosts and guests, with their different inclinations and interests, may favour one definition over another. This leads to a threat of "Babelization" that should be cleared up before voting on, and signing, documents.

A world summit dedicated to communication and information should be an occasion for some terminological clarification, creating an acceptable conceptual platform in which each person can see reflected the definition that he or she finds most convincing. This should be possible, provided that we go back to the abstract generic approach to the two concepts—to pure communicating and informing.

To create such a platform, we must in fact return to the most comprehensive and important category in our field, that of relation, and ask ourselves what type of relation, how much relation, and what quality of relation are needed to ensure that human beings have information and

communication. To put it another way, what model of human relations do information and communication tend to support?

Pure philosophy has unfortunately not dealt with a schematization of the categories of relation at different anthropological levels, but it has clearly determined what such categories were for all possible schematizations. (Definitions in parentheses, below, are Kantian, and should be retained.)

- Inherence (relation between substance and accident)
- Causality (relation between cause and effect)
- Community (reciprocal action between agent and patient)

Brought down to the area of communications, these can be schematized as follows:

Inherence	=	Communion
Causality	=	Information
Community	=	Community

The first category, communion, would not seem to be applicable to the human community in any of its communicative modes, since it connotes an absolute inherence of one thing in another, erasing all distance and difference of identity between the merged subjects. Rather, it is applicable to the inanimate (the whiteness inherent in snow, the hardness of stone) or the supernatural (the communion of the saints). Metaphorically only, it can be used to refer to moments of religious, mystical or love-induced ecstasy, properly defined as "nothingness" and "loss of oneself in otherness", a state of pure unrelatedness. As the zero level of relation, communion denotes a state, which makes it unusable as a means of conceiving of communication relationships, which always, and in every case, imply distance and distinction between the subjects or parties involved.

Information and communication remain the two basic categories capable of defining communicative relations between human beings.

As categories, the dialectical laws that unite them are ineradicable. To speak of information always, and necessarily, brings us back to communication, and vice versa. It would be entirely irrational to attempt to understand one of the two processes in total separation from the other. They are mutually explanatory. Given this dialectic, it is strictly true that, in praxis, any increment in the informative necessarily generates a drop in the communicative, and vice versa.

Information is ontologically related to causality. It connotes the message/cause of an active transmitter who seeks to generate in a receiving patient an immediate or remote behaviour/effect.

Communication is ontologically related to community. It connotes a message/dialogue that seeks to produce unprogrammed response, reciprocity, consensus and shared decisions.

Hence, information categorically expresses a less perfect or balanced communicating relationship than does communication, and tends to produce more verticality than equality, more subordination than reciprocity, more competitiveness than complementarity, more imperatives than indicatives, more orders than dialogue, more propaganda than persuasion.

The foregoing are no more than conceptual schemes intended to classify or include each communicative situation in the genus to which it belongs. In the actual historical world of human beings, it is impossible to find a relation of pure information (like the thermostat-heater) or a relation of pure communication. One might as successfully seek justice, beauty or truth in the pure state. But these schemes make it possible to define and describe all communicative relations, to have a solid basis on which to affirm that the informative or communicative component is manifest or predominant in this or that relation.

Information refers to a predominantly informative message in which one of the poles always or predominantly functions as transmitter, while the other always or predominantly functions as receiver. The transmitter tends here to institutionalize his transmission capacity, which is a way of institutionalizing and fixing the mute receiving function at the opposite pole. The receiver faces increasing difficulty, or is unable to turn himself into transmitter, and the establishment of reciprocity is prevented. This is replaced by a pseudo-interactivity that masquerades as reciprocity, or the receiver is simply left without immediate return channels. It thus becomes easier for institutionalized transmitters to exploit for their own benefit their causal monologues before a mute and powerless receiver, becoming, in turn, at will, in an immediate way, a transmitter. This cause-determined, rather than dialogue-determined, relation makes the informative message partially or totally unquestionable. Even with the best possible intentions, such messages tend to become command messages that silence the receiver—propagandistic, informative messages.

This relation, which tends to be informative, may also usefully be called cybernetic or piloted (*kubernetés* meaning pilot in Homeric Greek). The term cybernetic should be reserved exclusively for functions that include a component of external control. Its use (or the use of cyber), in place of *tele*, as a synonym of distance, in terms such as cyberspace, cybersecurity, cybercrime, cyberlearning and cyberhealth, is quite inappropriate.

Two corollaries can be raised:

1. Modern mediatization has greatly favoured the information message, because of the predominance of one-way channels that have physically and temporally distanced the transmitter and receiver. This means that the transmitter becomes part of an elite, while the mute receiver is seen as a mass. Some media (more precisely, some artificial channels of communication) act as diodes: they channel the flow of messages in one direction but do not permit messages to flow in the other. This reinforces the institutionalization of the transmitter and the causal character of the informative relationship—that is, the propaganda effect of massive messages. (A fool with a microphone shapes public opinion today far more than a wise man speaking with his neighbours on the corner by his house.)
2. The information relation becomes an aspect of the distribution of labour, and can be the fruit of an unwritten social compact. Many positive information relations (such as reading, viewing art, education) are consensual. The receiver desists *a priori*, and voluntarily, from using his transmitting power and consciously assumes a receiver role that he intuits will not remove from him his power to dialogue. He is quiet because he knows that the transmitting source does not wish to make him mute. ("Only in true speech is true silence possible," said the philosopher Martin Heidegger.)

Communication, or predominantly communicative messages, or genuine dialogue, occurs when both poles encompass the foregoing up/down or cause/effect pattern and in principle share identical power as transmitter and receiver, with the same ability to shift instantaneously between the two; when the receiver is respected without any attempt to in-form him or induce his responses, but rather, to generate in him a rational understanding of ideas and facts in a climate of reciprocity; when all players are given the same active role and enjoy the use of the same channel, a situation that favours those channels that ensure instantaneous bidirectionality (and note that the delegation or contracting of some communicating capacity to a spokesperson does not violate the rule); when, through dialogue, in lieu of a process of persuading or ordering, a truth higher than the one initially held is reached, or an unpreconceived, shared and consensual decision is attained. To communicate means preserving an optimal "distance" from one's interlocutor, and being open to his propositions. This, in turn, means respecting his otherness without pretending to absorb, alienate or reify him by reducing him via a causal message. To communicate is to achieve a well-tempered relationship that allows harmony to germinate. The laconic and perfect Kantian definition of reciprocal action between agent and patient, however, remains insuperable.

Two further schematizations can be mentioned:

1. *In the sociopolitical area:* Only genuine and open communications can create a critical mass of reciprocities capable of giving life to authentic open and free communities and unmanipulated public opinion. Any attempt to make informative relations more efficient can only create a further accumulation of privileges in the transmitter, and a corresponding decline in communicability, reciprocity, sociability, pluralism and democracy. Only by tirelessly keeping alive areas of sufficient communicative reciprocity without a predominance of causative factors, is it possible to imagine the survival of genuine democracy—an unrenounceable model of human relations that would be smothered in an all-informative universe. Any attempt to replace a dialogue of equals with a more efficient but desocializing informational charge inevitably creates effects that tend to deconstruct the social plexus. In this order of ideas, the phrase information society is hardly more than a cosmetic contradiction in terms (since only communication creates society), while the phrase social communication is a tautology (since communication is, by its essence, social).
2. *In the instrumental and institutional area:* The constantly evolving panoply of artificial channels of communication, or media, as well as the human institutions that use them, should be organized in a hierarchy according to their ability to be vehicles for, or promote, either communication or information. Today, the hierarchy would no doubt be headed by the Internet and the telephone (in that order, for the Internet, by addressing many receivers simultaneously, has addressed the last gap that the telephone was unable to fill), which are the two great instruments of open bidirectionality, of simultaneous use of an identical channel—in a word, of reciprocity and democracy. Leading candidates for the bottom of the list would be television, or, best of all, press agencies, the last surviving dinosaurs of communications, constituting an ever more meagre bundle of ever more powerful transmitters, broadcasting 40 million words per day of uniform thinking—a historical embodiment of everything in today's informative relation that is univectoral, causative, manipulatory, imposing and propagandistic.

Given this situation, it is rationally transparent, morally just and politically desirable to make efforts to:

1. Favour communication, which generates more reciprocity and fosters community, over the still necessary mechanisms of information, which should be required, insofar as possible, to be used progressively more communicatively, and always in accordance with the principles of the communication rights.
2. Favour the use of channels that facilitate bidirectionality, or that are less involved in imposing technological and economic constraints on users while accumulating advantages for transmitters.
3. Increase, to the extent possible, the coefficient of pluralism, transparency and democracy among institutions that have excessive power over technology, broadcasting and oversight of infrastructure, channels, codes and messages.

Communication Rights

Gnoseologically speaking, communication is the synthetic category that encompasses all communication relations, while, ontologically, it is the *raison d'être* of human relations. Hence, communication rights are among the original and organic human rights. Without using them fully, the rational being could not be a political animal, choose the modality of being with the other, or ensure the greatest possible reciprocity.

Only with great international will—a scarce commodity at this millennial juncture—can this essential, and still unwritten, chapter of human rights take form. Jean D'Arcy was right, in the 1980s, to complain that "no principle of international law regarding communications has yet been established," and the Communications Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) movement is right, today, to state that "the right to communicate constitutes a universal human right that assumes, and is at the service of, other human rights".

If they act in good faith, neither those who would prefer to see these rights as deriving from other existing rights, nor those advocates of global deregulation who deny the need for more international declarations on the subject, have anything to fear. The right implies no limitation. Rather, it extends communicative freedom to more people.

Unless, logically and ontologically, one turns things on their head, no specific existing right can give birth to a communication right that is more generic and of greater scope. The old sectoral rights come to us from eras that were localistic and shaped by a single medium, eras that did not understand the key role of communication in relation, and that did not foresee the capacity for use and abuse that the fourth estate would accumulate throughout the world (Burke 1774). Nor did they imagine a media system like today's, which would collapse without the far from innocent hundreds of billions of dollars that advertising injects into it.

Communication and information, deregulated and monopolized by the establishment, are today's most pertinent illustration of the fact that there are freedoms that enslave and laws that liberate (Fontenelle 1686). Its multiple anomies are defended by large corporate media law firms, with Cold War arguments. We already know what it has meant—in terms of *laissez faire*—for the ITU, which is hosting WSIS 2003, to be acting without the good judgment and thought that many would wish—because it does not, for instance, have a charter that requires it to work to promote equity. We have unconnected but usable fragments of a future and coherent communication right. Principles of freedom of expression consecrated by the international community, free use of any medium to exercise this freedom, and a prohibition on harassing those who exercise it, continue to be solid building blocks for constructing a fundamental communication right. All other rights related to the communicative relation—first of all, the right to information (improperly called access to information)—should be considered subsidiary and as deriving from it. Anything imposed on them, which contradicts the original and fundamental principles of communication rights, should be considered invalid.

Episodes such as those that occurred during the Second World War, in which an occupying power prohibited the inhabitants of an invaded country from using their native tongue—that is, from making use of the pristine, fundamental and pre-media communicative function of one being with the other—can be considered among the most brutal violations of the basic and unrestrictable communication right. Seen against the background of today's myopic media interests, the episode shows that a future communication right will have to cover an area of praxis far greater than that covered by Article 19 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, or the highly totemized but nineteenth-century principle of "freedom of expression" (something increasingly virtual in a hypermedia age, without a corresponding "freedom of communication")—an area that absolutely cannot be reduced either to the economic-political-media casuistry in which it is usually put into neat categories, or to business's diatribe against a state that is a Leviathan and an enemy by virtue of its antonomasia of freedoms. Only when communication rights are codified will the postulate with which D'Arcy began a famous 1969 essay be satisfied: "The declaration of human rights that…establishes for the first time in its Article 19 the right of man to information, will some day have to recognize the existence of a broader right: man's right to communication".

Let us enumerate half a dozen ingredients of communication rights that can be deduced from what we have stated so far:

1. Communication is the transmitting/receiving between equipolar and reciprocal poles, in agreed codes, of knowledge or feeling translated into the form of a message.
2. It is an inalienable birthright of human beings, gifted like no other being for the coding/transmission and decoding/receiving of messages, for one to know the other, through intercommunication in codes and channels selected by them. Their capacity to interact and their elevation into political beings depend on the free exercise of this right to a communicative relation.
3. Since reciprocal action is the defining concept, by antonomasia, of communication, a communication right should first, insofar as possible, guarantee all parties in a communicative relationship the isodynamic character of the relation. In other words, they must have the same identical practical ability to code, select channels, and transmit and receive messages, thus preventing a communicative relationship from deteriorating into an informing relationship. Subsidiarily, communication rights will set the conditions for a partial, delegated and consensual ceding of such prerogatives and capacities (see below).
4. Human societies, ideally considered as a hierarchical continuum from open to closed, reflect the communicative relations prevailing in them and how their citizens exercise communication rights. Any change in the communicative model leads to social change; any communicative imbalance leads to degradation of communication into information; any obstacle put in the way of the free exercise of communication rights, in regard to codes, channels, content, moment, place, or choice of receivers, is an attack on the relational nature of human beings and should be considered a crime.
5. Individual and social rights to communication (when democratically defined) have the same dignity and must be harmoniously reconciled.
6. Communication rights are inalienable and can be delegated to vicarious communicators at will. However, the *realpolitik* that disfigured just delegation and permitted political-economic powers to hoard the majority of such rights without democratic consensus (even legalizing the immoral principle of first come first served) will have to be reviewed in its entirety. That confiscated right must be returned to human societies, and the maximum possible pluralism and equity must be restored to free communication.

The Free Flow of Information

The free flow of information inflamed the world for a time in the 1970s and 1980s, when the champions of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO)—derived from the preceding New World Economic Order, or NWEO—postulated a need to rectify information imbalances and open communicative opportunities to those lacking in communicative power. They were immediately dismissed as proponents of statization and as Soviet accomplices, and the English-speaking West responded with a tough defence of free flow, which (in Foster Dulles style) was declared an unrenounceable principle of democracy. The bellows of the Cold War did the rest. The most educational and objective document of the period is still resolution 4/19 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference. It bears rereading.

In the area of freedom, an Aristotelian prudence is called for. We ourselves, and coming generations, will continue to debate this complex and metaphysical subject, and it is a healthy precaution to assume that those who claim to possess the perfect libertarian formula for communications (and want to impose it on everyone else) are ignorant, arrogant or paid. The problem of free flow re-emerges incessantly, though, and a conceptual refresher is in order.

Free flow stresses the notion of channel: it advocates the most absolute and unconstrained freedom of circulation for messages, especially across borders, with an absence of geopolitical, technological or legal obstacles, except as provided for in international treaties. It favours an information universe without gaps or blockages, a universe open to all, which explains the capital importance given to it in the West during the Cold War decades, when radio transmissions to Iron Curtain countries undermined people's belief in socialism and led the Soviet Union to consume a billion kilowatts annually—and futilely—to block the broadcasts.

With the Cold War officially over, an unfortunate conclusion forces itself upon us: an ephemeral East-West confrontation was used to sweep away a structural North-South disparity. All of the old imbalances have been aggravated: the strong communicators have accumulated more power, while the weak are weaker. An understandable aura of suspicion continues to surround the theoretically irrefutable principle of free flow, which the United States used for its own self-interest for decades, like a sort of free navigation treaty imposed by the United States or China on Bolivia or Switzerland to give the latter countries one more high-sounding freedom, while the former get all of the world's shipping. The South was declared free, but was deprived of the instruments to exercise its freedom (its own news agencies, movie industry laws, local cultural

industries, and so on). The poor example provided by Roman Proconsul Titus Quintus Flaminius in 196 B.C., when he declared that occupied Greece was free, has apparently lost none of its inspiring charm.

Today, the notion of free flow has more subtle complexities as a result of network technologies, codes and filters that, on the one hand, have broadened personal freedoms for individuals (a total information blackout is difficult or impossible today, even in countries where communications are highly controlled), while, on the other, lending themselves (ever more docilely) to capillary espionage, an activity defined by the experts as systematic information theft. Indeed, we have entered a new age of globally surveilled freedom, a paradox by which we are sold more freedom to better surveil ourselves.

Unprecedented problems of free flow emerge from one moment to the next. Extreme freedom enthusiasts believe that each new technology opens the frontiers of a new Wild West for freedom to conquer. They do not want to understand that if paedophilia or apologies for Nazism are violations of criminal codes, these activities do not become innocent by virtue of being committed on the Internet. On the suspicious side, let us remember that:

- every new communication technology (frequently as a result of government demands on equipment manufacturers) increases the possibility of locating users, intercepting or emptying their digital memories and copying their messages;
- the free use of confidential codes, as well as open codes (more difficult to spy on and control), is under greater attack every day;
- the country that, for now, owns the Global Positioning System (GPS), the Internet, and hundreds of communication and espionage satellites is the only one with the unilateral ability to block the communications of some or all of humanity, while it deploys its best efforts to prevent other countries from acquiring their own GPS systems;
- information, precursor of power, is not only one of the most coveted goods today, but the most manipulated in its most remote terrain—and it does not take preparations for an invasion of Iraq to prove it (the work on the economics of information that won J.E. Stiglitz the Nobel prize dealt with the "information asymmetry" generated by economic agents who fraudulently accumulate more information than others);
- universal electronic espionage has become extremely efficient and is now a real phenomenon (through companies such as Echelon, Carnivore, Fluent and Oasis), especially since the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, and the Total Information Awareness (TIA), which controls people

> through networks, is already a reality, while the Pentagon's Office of Strategic Influence is like a "007" of information, with license to lie.

This unappealing, massively manipulated and surveilled freedom is already a part of our information society, and will become more so. Despite the solemn declarations of libertarians, this society has turned privacy into a suspicious value that is in danger of extinction. These arguments should be remembered for when the panegyrics reach strident levels.

Despite all of this, free flow is a beautiful, positive principle that we must defend in conferences and in real life, though we must unceasingly denounce abuses of dominant positions committed in its name. It would be infinitely worse to have no free flow at all. But one condition must be insisted upon: reciprocity is necessary to help the weak be as free as the powerful. A freedom that does not free is egotism and privilege. The double standard of free information in the abstract, while information in the concrete world is managed under mercantile principles that make it possible to eliminate the competition, is relationally and communicationally dishonest.

Access and Participation

These two antonyms, to which UNESCO dedicated a conference in 1974, are sources of confusion for three reasons:

- the frequent use of the former in lieu of the latter;
- deliberate exclusion of the latter; and
- certain ideological uses of the latter in the past era of socialism/communism.

For example—with our excuses to their authors—let us read the two following paragraphs from WSIS preparatory documents:

> Access to information and communications media as a public and international common good should be participatory, universal, broad in scope and democratic.
>
> Key principles: 1. Access to information and free flow of information are fundamental human rights.

(The term "participation" does not appear in any of the ten principles enunciated here.)

In the first case, we have access with a desire that it be participatory. In the second (where the subjects involved in communication are considered only as "users of communication, information

networks and the media"), the authors at no point use the term participation; and they implicitly repudiate various definitions of the present glossary, specifically those relating to communication rights and the free flow of information. They continue, in the Cold War mode, to consider that basic communication rights are access to information and free flow.

Where culture and communication are involved, we suggest assigning to those terms the following meanings:

- *Access:* exercised capacity to receive (decode, come to know, discover, investigate, demand, recover, or place in the public domain) messages of any kind.
- *Participation:* exercised capacity to produce and transmit (generate, code, provide a vehicle for, disseminate, publish or transmit) messages of any kind.

Taking a symphony orchestra to a working class neighbourhood facilitates access to live classical music (passive receiving); opening a music school in the neighbourhood creates a process of participation in musical life (active transmission). Those countries whose media live exclusively on access to exogenous sources of information, without their own agencies and correspondents participating in creating information, lose all endogenous capacity to understand and interpret the world autonomously.

The following equation is thus produced:

$$\frac{\text{access}}{\text{receiving}} = \frac{\text{participation}}{\text{transmission}}$$

Reciprocal complementarities and negations are produced between access and participation (as between information and communication).

Growing ease of access makes participation more difficult and can inhibit it (and vice versa), generating more dependency, paternalism and social cybernetization, which explains the fact that the word access abounds in the hegemonic business discourse, while participation scarcely appears.

A society's communicative health can be measured in terms of the complementarity and healthy equilibrium existing between the plurality and quality of the messages to which it has access, and in terms of its share of participation in message generation and transmission (for example, the entire Latin American continent fails to participate, with agencies of its own, in the global production of news, while the population of the United States is kept practically without access to cinema from other parts of the world).

Access and free flow, as mentioned earlier, are key words in the vocabulary of the current information/communication world. With the

same passion that they use to defend free flow, the mentors of the information society preach access (even where there is an overabundance of it), while they hold firmly to the sin of omission where participation is concerned. Access, obviously, is construed in relation to the inputs and messages produced and put into motion by these advocates, while they maintain an embargo on elements that could facilitate a participatory process by which consumers would be transformed into producers. Such elements are free software, universal standards, open sources and codes, generosity as regards public domain and intellectual property, and so on. Thanks to this subtly engineered imbalance, many have erroneously been persuaded that an abundance of means of access, and of receivers, is equivalent to more communication and information, when the truth is the opposite. However, saturating the access function, to the point of dumping, yields high dividends. First of all, it discourages and inhibits any potential will to participate on the part of receivers. There is no lack of experiments in raising the access threshold, measuring how much messaging the user can still take in. (Urban neighbourhoods have been saturated with up to 500 television channels.) Meanwhile, a modest participatory project, such as a small, nearby television station managed by the community itself, would do what no overdose of access can ever do: improve relations, generate participation and promote genuine communication.

National laws regarding the right to information include a recent freedom of information bill in a large Asian country. The essential object is defined as being to "empower every citizen with the right to obtain information from the government". The very first article of the law restricts the right to one side of the coin: access. It guarantees citizens the power to know and use official information—we should say, in passing, that many private sources also prevent access to information—without even mentioning the positive, active and participatory side of the coin, which should also *a fortiori* be guaranteed: the right to generate and transmit information. In its official documents for WSIS, ITU assigns itself, as its main task, to "ensure universal access to the information society". The undesirable final product of this kind of semantic imprecision is that even in a document as important as the draft declarations and action plan of the second preparatory committee, the term access appears 47 times and the term participation only six—but not with the meanings discussed here (for example, "the participation of the private sector"). Thus, we can safely tally the score as 47 to 0. The notion of information, in and of itself limiting and desocializing, in relation to communication, receives a second limitation here by being reduced to mere access to the messages of others, amputating the participatory side, the creation and transmission of one's own messages.

An institutional reduction of the informative phenomenon when receiving others' knowledge and opinion without a counterpart, can only institutionalize the muteness of the receiver/consumer. This is a coherent goal only in the framework of economistic conceptions of communication, where the receiver/client hardly counts, where what counts is cost benefit, economies of scale, targets and return on advertising investment—criteria that communications policy has gradually made its own. Furthermore, our societies become information societies in proportion to their degree of connectivity. Its induced pro-access behaviours promote exaggerated and unnecessary consumption both of decoding terminals (landline and cellular telephones, fax, radios, televisions, computers, modems, scanners, antennas, connections, and so on) and telecommunications vectors, whose rates will continue to be very high until their providers reabsorb the losses of the gigantic end-of-millennium speculations. Thus, it is major economic interests (not to mention political interests) that are the most important sources behind the pro-access discourse of the information society.

With all of these omissions, the term participation has been dangerously swept from the communication and information vocabulary. Now that WSIS is imminent, it is important to revive the word and make it into a driving concept that can help to hold back access hypertrophy, which can lead to serious participatory atrophy. In the information environment that surrounds us, which is the object of so many panegyrics (the ITU itself does not hesitate to speak of humanity's greatest revolution), individuals and societies should not resign themselves to being a chorus, or mere spectators, but should seek a leading, participatory role. In an area as anomic as communication, without basic social contracts to govern it, there is room to envisage original forms of participation. Many have already been invented, and it is simple enough to apply or fortify them. For example:

1. Given that almost all political regimes, even in the great democracies, tend to generate unhealthy forms of collusion between the executive branch and the media, behind the backs of the people, the societies must unflaggingly denounce such abuse of dominant positions and demand that the other branches of government take measures to guarantee more participation and real pluralism (not just "more of the same") in the production/transmission of messages.
2. In the name of a free flow that can coexist with other free flows, cultural diversities and the so-called cultural exception must be tirelessly safeguarded, in the interest of humanity as a whole. Specifically, this means:

- ensuring sufficient and appropriate participation, that is, presence in the media of the creator, producer and local transmitter of messages (a difficult battle at the international level, especially when it takes place in culturally incompetent institutions, such as the WTO); and
- where possible, negotiating coproduction or reciprocity.

3. Technological mediatization makes collaborative participation in producing and transmitting messages economically impossible for many aspiring transmitters today. Fair taxation should be used to ensure that those who profit from information/communication by using public goods on a concession basis, finance, even if only partially, economically unprofitable information/communication that is in the public interest. They must, indeed, make major efforts to ensure that everyone who participates in informative activity as a transmitter has free and equal access, without obstacles, to inputs and technologies that could be used selectively to benefit some and not others. At the international level, the efforts of developing countries to create and develop their own hardware and software capacity must be facilitated, not hindered.
4. Throughout the world, even in countries with long-established democracies, civil society and users have not yet gained the guarantee of a full participatory presence, through the mechanism of "user representatives". This is an important power, and represents significant decision-making power in, and in relation to, international, national, regional and local bodies that deal with communication and information. These range from United Nations organizations to national and international regulatory agencies, audiovisual councils, supervisory bodies for radio concessions, public broadcasting services and certain deontological committees. This participatory precept is indispensable, inasmuch as bodies that were once intergovernmental or public have been incorporating representatives of the private communication and information industries in their organizations, reproducing at the international level the type of collusion between government and business sectors that we have referred to on the national level. The immoral cohabitation of regulatory bodies and regulated sectors demands that the watchdog function of civil society be strengthened. The ITU, as organizer of WSIS, could provide a good example in that sense, creating a sort of Control Advisory Panel (CAP) made up entirely of users, to counterbalance the

Reform Advisory Panel (RAP), which is entirely devoted to the business sector.

5. Ensuring greater active citizen participation in communication processes should lead, among other things, to rediscovering the notion and benefits of public services in communications. Well-conceived and managed, these public services are still the best possible example of genuine participation, in three different ways:

    - by guaranteeing opportunities conducive to cultural creativity and diversity;
    - by being primarily financed with public funds (in some cases, fees and other contributions from the users themselves); and
    - by admitting elected user representatives into their decision-making bodies *ex officio*.

There are countries, especially in the Southern hemisphere, that have never experienced public services in the communications area, or whose experience was not positive. In some cases, such bodies degenerated into organs for government propaganda. It is a moral duty of those societies that know the advantages of efficient public services (such as post, telecom, radio and television) to take an educational role vis-à-vis the less fortunate. At a time when the privatization of world enterprise seems to have reached its upper limit, it would not be inappropriate for the following dreaded question to be posed at WSIS: Has the time not come for certain oligopolistic, anti-pluralistic, and totally unparticipatory information and communication services to be turned into (or turned back into) new-generation public services under strict civil society oversight, or even turned into user co-operatives?

The Information Society

Logically speaking (see above), "information society" is a contradiction in terms, a combining of the desocializing phenomenon of "information" with the strong, noble noun "society", which, in reality, relates only to communication. However, it is futile to impugn stereotypes that have become commonplaces. Let us adopt it with reservations, keeping it in mental quotation marks. Let us say, tolerantly, that information society here denotes that segment of a communication society in which, by pragmatic agreement, information relations predominate, but where the values and standards of communication, as formulated through communication rights, remain in full force.

Rather than an information society, ours is, more accurately, a "computerized" civilization, or an information-dependent one, to a degree directly proportional to the wealth of a country. In the past half-century, much knowledge has been democratized thanks to communications, and the production, conservation and dissemination of knowledge owes much to information and communication technologies. The Internet fulfilled telephony's age-old aspiration by further democratizing the medium: one can now address everyone simultaneously. The Web has not only achieved this, but has put the most efficient and unimaginable post office within everyone's reach, making it possible for anyone to produce his or her own newspaper and put it on display at that news-stand known as "the world".

This is a part of the "golden legend" to which we all clearly subscribe, though without letting ourselves be dazzled. However, a world summit is an almost unique occasion for comparing it with the "black legend"—not to replace the former with the latter (which would be infantile), but rather to seek a reasonable, middle path capable of protecting the vulnerable part of humanity from a deceitful and distracting show. This would make it possible to reach a consensus regarding a universally acceptable model of the information society, one that is clear in its teleology and with no tricks in its methods for achieving the agreed goals.

The first thing to note is that the so-called Pareto's Law has been reproduced or specifically schematized in communications. (Indeed, it would have been a miracle had this not been the case.) Eighty per cent of the world's wealth tends to accumulate, regardless of politics, in society's most favoured 20 per cent, though human avarice has recently broken through that ceiling, so that 87 per cent of the earth's wealth is now concentrated in that upper quintile. Communications (as Jipp's Law on the correspondence of telephone density and the gross domestic product, or GDP, showed decades ago) follow the same curve with exaggerated fidelity. In 2000, 91 per cent of Internet users (that is, 19 per cent of the world population) were concentrated in the OECD countries. During the months when Luxembourg was climbing to a density of 170 telephones per 100 inhabitants, Niger fell to 0.21 per 100 (a comparative ratio of 800 to 1 between the two countries). This suggests at least five major issues for the Geneva and Tunis meetings of WSIS to consider:

1. In the proper doses, with the proper amount of technology and the proper timing, communications and computerization undeniably improve quality of life. It would be wrong, however, to ignore the fact that the absolute dramatic priorities of 70 per cent of humankind continue to be protein, water, and a modicum of health and education, rather than an Internet connection. At

such scandalous levels of impoverishment, the idea of technology as saviour is unacceptable.

2. Assuming that one acts in good faith, one cannot change certain economic determinants. Connectivity will continue to be essentially a GDP-dependent variable. Humanity must first be relieved of its critical poverty, and along with this, access to information/communication can be improved.
3. Any attempt to violate this determining pattern is an error called "developmentalism". This approach failed in the 1960s, when it was thought that saturating the universe of the needy with the gadgets of the rich would be enough to make the needy act as if they were not.
4. The South is the last unsaturated reservoir of access. (There is almost no participation, which means an inability to compete.) It is the only place where strong market expansion is still possible, and it is also the part of the world with the highest telecommunication rates. This cocktail of ingredients explains why there is so much eagerness to provide more access terminals to the region.
5. Of all of the interlinked universes in which human relations move, the one that shows the least pluralism and democracy—the worst possible example of human relations—is, absurdly, today's communication universe. This is a perverse paradox, the result of an excessive confiscation and concentration of communicative power—a situation that must be ended. Any decision that does not democratize information/ communication on both sides—access and participation—is suspect and should be discarded. Otherwise, "universal access to the information society" could seem like selling glass beads to the poor, immortalizing the cartoon of the little farmhouse squashed under the weight of a much bigger satellite dish.

The second component of the black legend is sectoral anomy. The efforts, by those who generate almost all available information, to advance the information society in a context of more deregulation and an increasing legal vacuum, may be seen as another effort by maritime nations to impose a free navigation treaty on landlocked nations. It is essential that WSIS approve a first Universal Declaration on Communication Rights, of which a good draft is already in circulation. Let us limit ourselves to mentioning one of its aspects that is crucial today—that of the vicarious function in communications.

Ever since face-to-face communication was replaced by the media, which proliferated, but altered, intercommunication, almost all human communications have been "mediatized", depersonalized by the channel through which they pass. Some people were able to utilize the media

effectively, while others who were kept at a distance from the media were not heard. The media simultaneously brought expansion and communicative imbalance to human relations. In communications and information, the only legitimization of the transmitter (and not a codified legitimization) is either to have arrived first, or to have enough political and economic power to accumulate knowledge and convert it into messages. No social contract or international pact governs the power of the fourth estate. This finding is not aimed to take freedoms away from the fourth estate, but because of a desire to expand the freedom to those who did not get there first, or who have fewer resources. From Adam Smith to Jürgen Habermas, the validity of the controls exerted over government by public opinion, through its media, has been reconfirmed. However, complicity between government and the media—even in the great democracies—is of such vast scope that the question of who is to control the controllers is a global issue. There are 6 billion of us, and soon there will be 10 billion. The idea of all of us being transmitters through the mass media is obviously a nightmare. The acceptance of the practice of a few vicarious transmitters communicating and informing in the name of many is what the best logic suggests, in terms of social economy and distribution of labour. Nevertheless—and this is the problem—citizens without any real media communication capacity should continue to be considered as permanent depositories of that same unrenounceable power (see Heidegger's "silent does not mean mute") that they entrust to others to exercise in their name as a vicarious function. Communication rights should now lead, for the first time, to a legal category that provides for granting vicarious communicative power—without conflicting, obviously, with other basic human rights. Thus, today's frequent abuses of dominant position in information/communications can be minimized and punished. The granting process will obviously be more demanding when the delegated person makes concessional use of public goods (such as broadcast frequencies and public infrastructure). In such cases, the community has the right to impose a set of obligations and quality standards on the vicarious communicator, in order to ensure that the community receives the service for which it has granted the right of public transmission.

Third, human societies and their community organizations will have to state clearly and fearlessly whether they accept the concept that the information society should be, structurally, a society of suspicion, surveillance and espionage, under a unilateral, rather than a universally shared, system of security criteria.

Fourth, it should be remembered that an information society is not a future entelechy. It exists already, has its history and its owners, and has amply demonstrated its potentials and limitations. What should be

done, before designing another, better version, is to make a strategic accounting of the merits and demerits of the current system.

Our information society, for example, has already done things that, under the law, are not far from qualifying as criminal, namely, the two speculative bubbles used in an attempt to make of the Internet (in the United States) and UMTS telephony (in Europe) the mothers of all speculation. As of March 2000, Internet stock speculation had led to what was called "the greatest creation of wealth in the history of humanity". Less than three years later, $7 trillion had disappeared into an e-crack described as "the greatest destruction of wealth in peacetime". This loss was borne by millions of owners of savings who were bamboozled by dishonest managers, sales of pseudo-necessities, serious insider crimes, and criminal complicity by banks and firms providing analysis, auditing and financial advice. In short, they were defrauded by the system. In Europe, a powerful industrial lobby convinced the European Union (EU), in 1998, that EU countries could grant UMTS licenses, which a number of greedy governments hastened to do, collecting $314 billion in a few weeks. The technology was not ready, and countries that were already saturated with telephones bought in at prices more exorbitant than those paid for tulips in Holland in the seventeenth century. (In England, the cost of UMTS licenses reached the extravagant figure of $652 per inhabitant, while entire national telephone systems, such as Venezuela's, had been privatized at prices of $50–75 per inhabitant. Today, the countries with the greatest debt from telephony globally are those that bought UMTS at a high price.) The cost of these two speculations was transferred to users. It is calculated that for another entire generation, we will be paying for Internet and telephone service at artificially elevated prices in order to allow the firms involved to recover their losses. With deceptive Internet bubbles, malicious speculations of the UMTS variety, fraudulent bankruptcies on the Global Crossing model, and suspicious frauds such as the already forgotten millennium bug, it would be best for WSIS to place all of this out in the open and demand a minimum of guarantees to ensure that such things will not happen again.

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