communicating in the information society

edited by **Bruce Girard**
and **Seán Ó Siochrú**

UNRISD
UNITED NATIONS
RESEARCH INSTITUTE
FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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[*] Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is an international campaign working to ensure that communication rights are at the heart of the information society. CRIS is active in the WSIS process at every level, collaborating with NGOs with similar aims; it also promotes communication rights at the World Social Forum and other events, and through national-level campaigns. CRIS was initiated by the Platform for Communication Rights, a coalition of NGOs involved in media and communication around the world. See www.crisinfo.org.

James Deane is executive director of Panos London and one of the founding members of the Panos Institute. He was formerly director of Panos' Communications and Social Change Programme, and author of several publications on new information technologies and developing countries. He has advised and been a consultant to many international organizations including the Rockefeller Foundation, the World Bank, the Department for International Development in the United Kingdom and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He has an M.A. in International Communication and Development and is a visiting fellow at the London School of Economics.

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Foreword

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) has been supporting research on the interaction between societies and informational developments since it held the Information Technologies and Social Development Conference in Geneva in 1998. This has resulted in a range of publications on many aspects of information-related change. However eclectic their subject or origin, a number of common themes have emerged. One is recognition of the multiple interplays between societies, and the adoption, appropriation and development of informational technologies: interplays that refute any simplistic notion of technological determinism. Another, conesquently, is the necessity for critical thinking, debate and the transparent and accountable making of choices if appropriate informational strategies are to be adopted in any society.

It therefore seemed fitting, on the occasion of the first World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)—which is also the first UN-sponsored world summit to specifically seek the formal participation of civil society—for UNRISD to emphasize the importance of societal perspectives on information society debates. It invited Bruce Girard and Seán Ó Siochrú of Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS), a civil society organization active in the WSIS process, to select and edit a collection of essays on what they saw as core issues. I am very pleased to present the result, along with an introduction from the editors, which makes clear both the rationale for the selection of individual contributions and the questions they, as a collection, pose for the ongoing debate.

And the debate is ongoing. WSIS 2003 in Geneva will lead to WSIS 2005 in Tunis, and who knows what beyond. In the meantime, individual nations and agencies will be developing their information-related strategies and making large investments accordingly. If few now argue that information and communication technologies (ICTs) alone will solve their problems, not many articulate a clear vision of what ICTs can contribute to internal social and economic development, as distinct from their role in enabling globalization. Three decades ago, in the 1970s, UNRISD research brought to light the social and developmental inadequacies of an earlier revolution that was led by technology: the Green Revolution. This time I would hope that the ongoing debate will be enriched by sufficient disinterested research on informational developments within societies so as to avoid such disappointing discoveries in the future.

I would like to thank the government of the Netherlands for its particular interest in and support for UNRISD's work on the social

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Director
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Acronyms

ABC	American Broadcasting Corporation
ABN	African Broadcasting Network
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ALC	Latin American and Caribbean Communications Agency
AOL	America Online, Inc.
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
ASL	American sign language
AT&T	American Telephone and Telegraph
ATM	asynchronous transfer mode (in "Locating the information society within civil society")
ATM	automatic teller machine (in "A community informatics for the information society")
AWORC	Asian Women's Resource Exchange
BAZ	Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCE	Bell Canada Enterprises
BMC	BioMed Central
BOAI	Budapest Open Access Initiative
CAP	Control Advisory Panel
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CD	compact disc
CD-ROM	compact disc—read-only memory
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIRA	Community Informatics Research Application Unit
CIRC	Community Informatics Resource Center
CNN	Cable News Network
CNSLP	Canadian National Site Licensing Project
COTS	commercial off-the-shelf
CPSR	Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility
CRIS	Communication Rights in the Information Society
DeCSS	Decryption of Contents Scrambling System
DMCA	Digital Millennium Copyright Act
DNA	deoxyribonucleic acid
DOS	disk operating system
DVD	digital versatile disc
EC	European Commission
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
eIFL	Electronic Information for Libraries
EU	European Union
FCC	Federal Communication Commission
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
FIRE	Feminist Interactive Radio Endeavour
FM	frequency modulation
G-8	Group of Eight
GA	United Nations General Assembly
GDP	gross domestic product

GIS	geographic information systems
GPS	global positioning system
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HTML	hyper-text markup language
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
ICASA	Independent Communication Authority of South Africa
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICT	information and communication technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INCP	International Network on Cultural Policy
IP	Internet protocol
IPRs	intellectual property rights
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IT	information technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IWTC	International Women's Tribune Center
LBC	Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation
LDC	least developed country
MB	megabytes
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MIS	management information systems
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NDLTD	Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations
NEAR	National Electronic Archive Repository
NGO	non-governmental organization
NIH	National Institutes of Health
NWEO	New World Economic Order
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
OAI	Open Archive Initiative
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OI	organizational informatics
OP	Optional Protocol
OSI	Open Source Initiative
PANA	Panafrican News Agency
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PDF	portable document format (Adobe Acrobat)
PEN	Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists
PLoS	Public Library of Science
PrepCom	preparatory committee
PRSP	poverty reduction strategy papers
RAP	Reform Advisory Panel, International Telecommunication Union
RATELVE	Venezuelan Radio and Television Project
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation

SCI	Science Citation Index
SLETP	Sri Lanka Environmental Television Project
STM	science, technology and medicine
TAMWA	Tanzania Women's Media Association
TCP	transmission control protocol
TDD	telecommunications devises for the deaf
TIA	Total Information Awareness
TNC	transnational corporation
Tulip	The University Licensing Programme
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UMTS	Universal Mobile Telecommunications System
UN	United Nations
UNCSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNU	United Nations University
UNU/IIST	United Nations University/International Institute for Software Technology
UNU/INTECH	United Nations University/Institute for New Technologies
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
WACC	World Association for Christian Communication
WCCD	World Commission on Culture and Development
WENT	Women's Electronic Network Training
WHO	World Health Organization
WiFi	wireless fidelity
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WNSP	Women's Networking Support Programme
WSIS	World Summit on the Information Society
WTO	World Trade Organization

Bruce Girard is a researcher, writer and educator active in development communication and communication rights issues. He is a member of the CRIS Interim Coordinating Committee Working Group.

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Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) is a campaign to ensure that communication rights are central to the information society, as a means to enhance human rights and to strengthen the social, economic and cultural lives of people and communities.

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

Current research programmes include: Civil Society and Social Movements; Democracy, Governance and Human Rights; Identities, Conflict and Cohesion; Social Policy and Development; and Technology, Business and Society.

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