

### Information for All? The emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society (1990-2003)

Pohle, Julia

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Pohle, Julia

**Doctoral Thesis**

## Information for All? The emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society (1990-2003)

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## **Information for All?**

**The emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse on  
the information society (1990-2003)**

Julia Pohle





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## ABSTRACT

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is the only organisation of the United Nations with a clear mandate related to communication and information. This thesis closes a gap in research about UNESCO and its involvement in international communication debates by analysing the emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society between 1990 and 2003, the intermediary period between the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). Taking into account the historical, political and institutional background of UNESCO and its activities in the field of information and communication, the empirical analysis focuses on three different policy processes that contributed to UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society: the INFOethics conference series; the creation of UNESCO's intergovernmental Information For All Programme (IFAP); and the preparation of the Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace. However, instead of assessing the discourse as it is reflected by the final output of these policy processes, the thesis aims to challenge traditional policy analysis by focusing on the interaction of policy actors and the practices and arguments they use in order to retrace the emergence of discourse during these processes.

To account for this interest in the collective creation of discourse, the empirical research is based on a conceptual framework that draws on different, yet interrelated, theoretical and methodological approaches. On the one hand, the analysis of discursive exchanges is built on poststructuralist approaches to International Relations and policy studies and the method of Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA). On the other hand, the analysis of actors and their practices is inspired by constructivist perspectives on meaning-making in social processes, and draws on concepts and tools from Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Building on extensive archive research and interviews, these approaches are combined in such a way as to make possible a detailed account of UNESCO's policy-making and to analyse the emergence of its policy discourse on the information society as the outcome of discursive struggles among networks of actors. The results of this analysis suggest that UNESCO's policy discourse was influenced by the concrete dynamics on the micro-level and conflicts between competing ideas far more than by abstract interests and overarching power structures. Based on the empirical evidence, the thesis frames these conflicting ideas as the result of paradoxes deriving from deep-rooted misunderstandings about the value of information and the possibility of intervention in a society driven by digital technology. It thereby contributes both empirically and theoretically to the fundamental understanding of the ideas and interests underlying international policy debates about the cultural, social and economic challenges posed by the growing digitalisation of society.





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To have spent the last years of my life as a doctoral researcher has been a privilege. During this time, I travelled to fifteen different countries on four continents to attend meetings, discuss my research and learn from the work of others. I lived in three different countries, switching between four different languages. I attended five summer schools and an infinite number of conferences and meetings. But most importantly, I met many intelligent people from all over the world, several of whom I now call friends. I had always been told that doing a PhD is a lonely experience. Mine turned out to be very different.

The long and eventful journey of these last years would not have been possible without the continuous support of my two supervisors: Divina Frau-Meigs, who embarked with me on this journey early on, introduced me to the world of international communication research, helped me to find my way, and continued to inspire and guide my research and writing over all these years. And Leo Van Audenhove, who took me on board, provided me with an institutional harbour, saved me from an illegal taxi in Nairobi, and never stopped pushing me further with his encouraging and provocative comments. Both of them have been extraordinary mentors, and I would like to thank them for everything they taught me, for their guidance, for their trust and for their friendship.

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A very warm thanks also to Eve Macdonald and Graham Wetherall for proofreading this thesis, and to Sara Iglesias for her patient diligence with the many hundreds of footnotes and archive references.

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### **Note on references to UNESCO documents and archival records**

The research of this thesis is built on the consultation of records and documents produced and retained by UNESCO. Since large parts of these records do not have traditional archive references or document codes, their location has been indicated in the following manner:

- UNESCO documents that can be consulted in full-text via UNESCO’s official document database (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/>) are followed by the note “UNESDOC”.
- Records that have been consulted in the UNESCO Archives are indicated through the note “UA”, followed by the archive code of the file or the collection in which they are contained in, e.g. UA: CI/INF/192.
- Some records of the Intergovernmental Bureau for Informatics (IBI) were consulted before they had been integrated in the existing collection of the UNESCO Archives. Therefore, no archive code could be cited. This is indicated through the note “UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code”.
- Some records of UNESCO’s Sector for Communication and Information were consulted while they were still located in the offices of the sector and before their official transfer to the UNESCO Archives. Accordingly, no archive code could be cited. This is indicated through the note “consulted before official archiving, no UA code”.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| ACCT      | Agence pour La Francophonie   |
| ADA       | Argumentative Discourse Analysis  |
| ADG       | Assistant Director-General  |
| ADG/CII   | Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics                                       |
| ANT       | Actor-Network Theory  |
| APA       | Argumentative Policy Analysis   |
| CAME      | Conference of Allied Ministers  |
| CDA       | Critical Discourse Analysis   |
| CERN      | European Organisation for Nuclear Research  |
| CI        | Sector for Communication and Information  |
| CII       | Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics   |
| COMEST    | World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology   |
| CSTD      | Commission on Science and Technology for Development  |
| DEVCOM    | Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development |
| DG        | Director-General  |
| DIR/INF   | Director of the Division for Information and Informatics (later Information Society Division)                   |
| DOT Force | Digital Opportunity Task Force  |
| ECOSOC    | United Nations Economic and Social Council  |
| FID       | International Federation for Documentation  |
| FIEJ      | International Federation of Newspaper Editors   |
| GATT      | General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade  |
| GII       | Global Information Infrastructure   |
| HLEG      | High Level Expert Group of the European Commission  |
| IAMCR     | International Association for Media and Communication Research  |
| IAPA      | Inter American Press Association  |
| IBC       | International Bioethics Commission  |

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| IBI     | Intergovernmental Bureau of Informatics                                       |
| ICA     | International Council of Archives   |
| ICC     | International Computing Centre  |
| ICIC    | International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation                           |
| ICOMOS  | International Council on Monuments and Sites                                  |
| ICSU    | International Council of Scientific Unions                                    |
| ICT     | Information and Communication Technology                                      |
| ICT4D   | Information and Communication Technology for Development                      |
| IFAP    | Information For All Programme   |
| IFIP    | International Federation of Information Processing                            |
| IFLA    | International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions             |
| IICI    | International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation                          |
| IIP     | Intergovernmental Informatics programme                                       |
| ILO     | International Labour Organisation   |
| INA     | Institut National de l'Audiovisuel  |
| INCP    | International Network of Cultural Policies                                    |
| CII/INF | Division for Information and Informatics (later Information Society Division) |
| IPA     | International Publishers' Association   |
| IPAL    | Institute for Latin America   |
| IPDC    | Intergovernmental Programme for the Development of Communication              |
| IPR     | Intellectual Property Rights  |
| IPS     | Inter Press Service   |
| IR      | International Relations   |
| ISP     | Internet Service Provider   |
| ISSC    | International Social Science Council  |
| ITU     | International Telecommunication Union   |
| MPAA    | Motion Pictures Association of America  |
| NAM     | Non-Aligned Movement  |
| NAS     | US National Academy of Sciences   |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| NATIS   | National Information Systems (UNESCO's library, archive and documentation programme) |
| NGO     | Non-governmental organisation  |
| NIEO    | New International Economic Order   |
| NII     | National Information Infrastructure  |
| NWICO   | New World Information and Communication Order  |
| OPP     | Obligatory Passage Point   |
| PGI     | General Information Programme  |
| r2c     | Right to Communicate   |
| SPIN    | International Conference on Strategies and Policies for informatics                  |
| SPINDE  | Special Programme of Informatics for Development                                     |
| STM     | International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers            |
| UA      | UNESCO Archives  |
| UDC     | Union for Democratic Communication   |
| UN      | United Nations   |
| UNCSTD  | United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development                  |
| UNDP    | United Nations Development Programme   |
| UNESCO  | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation                     |
| UNESDOC | (UNESCO's Document Database)   |
| UNGA    | United Nations General Assembly  |
| UNISIST | (UNESCO's international programme for scientific and technical information)          |
| WACC    | World Association for Christian Communication  |
| WIPO    | World Intellectual Property Organisation   |
| WPFC    | World Press Freedom Committee  |
| WSIS    | World Summit on the Information Society  |
| WTO     | World Trade Organisation   |
| WWW     | World-Wide Web   |



# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*“For UNESCO, the information society represents a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is that the Organization must find an original and indisputable role in these sweeping changes that now pervade all society, and are of interest and concern to many other organizations. The opportunity is that the values and tools of the information society will give UNESCO a unique occasion to fulfil one of its fundamental missions to develop the ‘free exchange of ideas and knowledge’.”<sup>1</sup>*

In March 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) held a large international conference at its Headquarters in Paris to discuss the outcome of a comprehensive study on Internet-related issues in UNESCO’s fields of competence. Building on the concept of “Internet Universality”, the conference’s objective was to develop a set of recommendations on how UNESCO’s member states should address the challenges that the transnational and multi-dimensional nature of the Internet poses for access to information, freedom of expression, privacy and ethics.<sup>2</sup> Although it was presented as the launch of UNESCO’s policy response to the short and long-term effects of the Internet, the initiative is only the most recent episode in a long series of exchanges on the challenges of the information society that UNESCO has hosted during recent decades. In fact, it could even be considered to be only the most recent of the many attempts that UNESCO undertook in order to live up to the mandate related to communication and information that was inscribed into its constitution precisely 70 years ago.

During UNESCO’s inception in 1945, the organisation was charged with the responsibility of “advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication” and of preparing “such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, “Implementation of 151 EX/Decision 3.4.3 concerning the challenges of the Information Highways: The role of UNESCO”, 154 EX/15, 18 March 1998, 1 (UNESDOC).

<sup>2</sup> The draft study and the outcome document of the conference are available on the UNESCO website: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/events/calendar-of-events/events-websites/connecting-the-dots/home/> (last accessed 19 June 2015).

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (London: UNESCO, 1945).

As such, UNESCO is the only specialised agency of the United Nations that has a clear mandate related to media, communication and information. In addition, the mandate is explicitly linked to a normative mission, putting communication and information in the service of intercultural understanding and the global exchange of knowledge. However, in an international community, in which every member is informed by distinct traditions, values, religious and legal norms and ideological beliefs, there is not only one correct way of achieving these normative goals. For this reason, ever since its inception, UNESCO has been dealing with controversial and often very politicised debates about the role of information and communication in society and about possibilities for the regulation of the increasingly complex informational environment for the benefit of the global community. The peak episodes of the UNESCO's involvement in these debates —its support of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the 1970s-80s, and its role during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2003-2005— have attracted much scholarly attention, in particular in Communication Studies. The intermediary period between these two events, however, remains underexamined, not only concerning UNESCO's activities but also with regard to the general debate over information flows and international communication geopolitics.<sup>4</sup> This lack of research is surprising, as it was during this period that UNESCO —like any other actor in the field— had to respond to the shift from analogue to digital information and communication technologies (ICTs), to the transition from concerns of national relevance to questions with a global dimension and to the transformative impact of the Internet on all spheres of social life. Thus, the timespan between NWICO and WSIS can be considered an incubation period in which new concepts, ideas and narratives had to be developed, which would frame these transitions within a coherent and comprehensive discourse on the role and value of information and communication in society.

This thesis aims at closing the gap in research about UNESCO's involvement in international communication debates by providing an in-depth analysis of UNESCO's policy position in the period between 1990 and 2003. The choice of focusing on UNESCO rather than any other agency is motivated by its unique and challenging mandate. In fact, it is not just the only UN agency with a concrete mission in the field of communication and information. It is furthermore the intellectual organisation of the

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<sup>4</sup> In 2012, the author of this thesis served as the co-editor of a volume that aimed at filling this gap in research by addressing the continuities and discontinuities between NWICO and WSIS and assessing their intermediary period. See Divina Frau-Meigs et al., eds., *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics – Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012). The book was the final output of the research project “North-South Media and Information Flows — from NWICO to WSIS”, sponsored by the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme Paris-Nord. For more details, see also <https://nwico2wsis.wordpress.com/> (last accessed 3 August 2015).

United Nations, and thus has a less practical or technical mandate than most other international organisations. Being in charge of education, culture, science and communication, UNESCO's objectives are not targeted at socio-economic development through economic growth, technological progress and innovation, but rather at intercultural understanding and intellectual exchange. Thus, the analysis of UNESCO's activities of the last decades lends itself in an exemplary manner to the study of competing perspectives on the societal impact of information and communication which take into account aspects other than the technological and economic.

In addition, the thesis addresses another underexamined issue in communication and policy studies, namely the influence of different visions of an information society on policy thinking. It was precisely during the period under scrutiny in this thesis that the term "information society" took centre stage in policy debates, first on the national and later also on the international level. Yet, in these debates, the term "information society" was rarely defined in a coherent manner. In fact, it was not used to refer to a clear concept or definable state of a society but as a metaphor to capture the importance of information usage as one of the core aspects that drive societal and economic progress. Accordingly, the policy debates on the information society were not simply a response to actual changes in the economic, occupational, societal and cultural spheres; they were just as much a response to the different narratives of the changes triggered by ICTs and to the promises of a brighter future.<sup>5</sup>

Many leading information society theorists have aimed to develop an all-encompassing narrative of the information society as a new type of society based upon the use of information and ICTs. However, none of them succeeded in imposing a single theory of an information society that would supersede all alternative narratives. Instead, up to the present day, there continues to be a variety of attempts that try to explain changes in societies with reference to the increasingly important role of information, knowledge and digital technology. As a consequence, there is a multitude of visions and ideas about what a society labelled an "information society" should look like, on which values it should be based and how it should be regulated. In addition, while the term "information society" dominated most debates during the 1990s and beyond, there has always been a number of competing concepts, such as "post-industrial society", "network society", "knowledge society"; they are used to describe similar visions, while emphasising different aspects of the same phenomenon. Translated in different ways into policy texts and initiatives, each

---

<sup>5</sup> Jeanette Hofmann, "Information und Wissen als Gegenstand oder Ressource von Regulierung", in *Politik und die Regulierung von Information*, ed. Andreas Busch and Jeanette Hofmann (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012), 6.

of these visions results in a different policy discourse on the information society. Yet, how these different and often competing visions are translated into policy discourse has rarely been analysed on the theoretical or empirical level.

This thesis fills this gap in research by questioning how UNESCO, as one particular actor in international communication, developed a discourse on the information society. Thus, instead of simply looking at UNESCO's official policy statements in order to assess the discourse inscribed in them, it tries to open the black box of its policy-making and decision-making processes. As an intergovernmental organisation with more than 190 member states and many non-governmental organisations working in an official consultative capacity, UNESCO never speaks with a single voice. Thus, in order to understand in detail the multiple processes and elements that influenced UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society and led to concrete policy decisions, the thesis asks not simply which ideas were taken up in policy debates. Rather, it questions how some ideas come to be adopted as the dominant way of thinking in an intergovernmental policy-making body, while other ideas are discarded.

This particular research interest derives from the idea that policy debates about the Internet and the information society, no matter whether they take place within UNESCO or elsewhere, are not solely influenced by theoretical knowledge, empirical data or rational choice-making, but just as much by the practices, ideas and discourses of policy actors. One of the research objectives of the thesis therefore consists in developing a theoretical and methodological framework that allows, on the one hand, for the analysis of policy-making processes and how they are impacted by actors, their practices, interests and power relations, and, on the other hand, for the study of the mutual interaction of discourses by different actors which are built on varying visions of an information society. Accordingly, this framework combines a detailed study of all involved policy actors and processes with a discursive analysis of their argumentative interactions and the ideas they express in policy debates. The first aspect, which in this thesis is referred to as the "performative dimension" of UNESCO's policy response to the information society, is assessed using selected tools and concepts of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), in particular those put forward by Bruno Latour. The second aspect, which is referred to as the "discursive dimension" of UNESCO's policy response, is analysed using the conceptual approach of Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA), developed by Marteen Hajer. Combined, they make it possible to address the following overarching research questions:



- Who are the main actors within and outside UNESCO who influenced its policy discourse, how did they interact, and which strategies did they use to introduce and promote their ideas and interests?
- Which competing arguments which link ideas to a larger narrative can be identified in UNESCO's policy debates during the period under scrutiny, and how were these arguments inscribed and institutionalised within the organisation's official policy discourse?
- How did the concrete dynamics and power relations on the micro-level influence the emergence of this discourse, and what does this tell us about the impact of ideas, interests and power in policy-making in general?

In order to answer these questions, the thesis is divided into five parts that build on each other:

*Part I* addresses the institutional, historical and thematic background that is necessary to understand the analysis of UNESCO's response to the information society. It introduces the origins, mandate and functioning of UNESCO, and the history of its activities regarding communication, information and digital technology. In addition, it presents UNESCO's particular relation with professional and academic communities working in the fields of its mandate. Finally, it retraces the general policy debate on the information society. The aim of this first part is to set the stage for the analysis of UNESCO's policy discourse in the intermediary period between NWICO and WSIS.

*Part II* presents the conceptual, theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis. It introduces the various theoretical and conceptual strands on which the empirical research is built, defines key concepts and develops the methodological and analytical framework by combining the two distinct approaches of Argumentative Discourse Analysis and Actor-Network Theory. In addition, it presents the research questions and the various empirical steps undertaken to answer them. Lastly, it addresses the difficulties encountered during the empirical research. The objective of this part is to develop a conceptual and methodological approach that makes it possible to address the particular research interest of discourse creation on the micro-level.

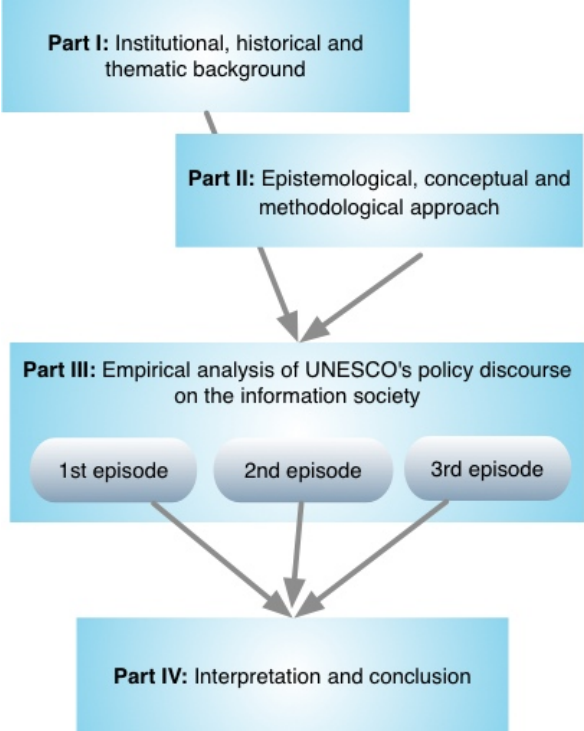
*Part III* presents the results of the empirical research. It therefore breaks up the development of the policy discourse into three distinct episodes. For each episode, it introduces the broader context and describes the performative dimension by giving a detailed account of the policy processes, the actors involved in it and their practices.

Moreover, for each episode, it presents the analysis of the discursive dimension by introducing the various emblematic issues and competing storylines that actors brought up during the analysed policy processes. The objective is to retrace the creation of UNESCO's policy discourse on both the performative and discursive level by focusing on the micro-level dynamics of key policy processes.

*Part IV* links the empirical research results back to the theoretical and conceptual research questions. As such, it compares the three episodes analysed in *Part III*, presents continuities and differences, and retraces the emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse over the entire period under scrutiny. In addition, it adds an extra layer to the analysis by assessing the origins of the competing ideas and visions that influenced the different discourses and by describing them as the result of the paradoxical nature of a global information society. It moreover addresses the limitations of the conceptual and methodological framework and illustrates ways to overcome them.

Finally, the appendices of this thesis include some background information and a selected number of texts illustrating the sources considered in the discourse analysis.

The following figure illustrates the structure of the thesis and the connection between its five parts:



*Figure 1: Structure of the thesis*

# PART I:

## Institutional, historical and thematic background

### Introduction

*“With the advent of the information age, [UNESCO’s] tasks have not only retained their relevance but, indeed, have taken on a new urgency, and concrete ways to fulfill them will need to be adapted to the new technological environment.”<sup>1</sup>*

The emergence of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society can only be understood against the background of the organisation’s rich history, its tasks as a specialised agency of the United Nations, and its involvement in international debates on communication and information issues. Indeed, UNESCO is not only the intellectual organisation of the United Nations and the only one with a clear mandate related to media and the free flow of ideas. In addition, from its inception in 1945, UNESCO has played a special, and often very controversial role in international communication politics — an engagement that has led more than once to conflicts within the organisation and amongst its member states.

These conflicts, along with the debates that triggered them and the crisis they caused for UNESCO as an organisation, affected the way in which the organisation responded to the arrival of digital technology in multiple ways. First of all, they determined the critical perspective that the UNESCO Secretariat developed with regard to the cultural, social and economic challenges posed by the growing digitalisation of society. Secondly, they impacted the often very sceptical manner in which UNESCO’s member states responded to the ideas put forward by the organisation’s Secretariat. And lastly, they influenced the high expectations that others had regarding UNESCO’s role in the digital age, especially the expectations of the professional and academic communities which have been involved

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO, “UNESCO and an Information Society for all. A position paper”, CII-96/WS/4, May 1996 (UNESDOC). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

in the organisation's work since its foundation. For all these reasons, in order to assess UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society and its emergence, it is necessary to understand the multiple struggles that the organisation had to face over the 70 years of its activity and policy-making in the field of information and communication and the various actors involved in it.<sup>2</sup>

But UNESCO's response to the arrival of the digital age was influenced not only by its own mandate and history, but also by the way in which others responded to it during the same period. Policy-making and the creation of policy discourse, understood as the ensemble of ideas, concepts, frames and definitions that structure policy thinking, never take place in isolation. Instead, these processes are likely to be strongly influenced by the broader policy debate on the issue and by the discourses of other actors and organisations, whether they are similar or fundamentally different. Hence, UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society reflected many of the ideas that were discussed contemporaneously in other venues. But it also differed from the discourses that dominated both national and international policy debates on the information society during the period under scrutiny in this thesis. In order to understand how and why UNESCO was able to develop such an alternative policy discourse, it is necessary to retrace these debates and the different perspectives that influenced them.

This first part of the thesis sets the stage for the analysis of UNESCO's policy response to the arrival of the digital age by introducing the institutional, historical and thematic background necessary for its understanding. Each of the three aspects addressed in this first introductory part—UNESCO as an institution, its history, and the debate on the information society—has attracted much scholarly attention.<sup>3</sup> As such, the following chapters avoid adding another extensive narrative of UNESCO or of the various theories of the information society. Instead, each of the three chapters aims to introduce only those specific elements that are relevant for the understanding of UNESCO's policy discourse and its emergence.

The first chapter serves to present the *institutional background of UNESCO* as the intellectual agency of the United Nations. To this end, it provides a short overview of UNESCO's origins, functioning and policy-making procedures before introducing the

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<sup>2</sup> The actors analysed in this thesis were of both genders. For the sake of simplicity, when only the masculine form is used, it shall refer equally to men and women.

<sup>3</sup> Without the aim of giving an extensive overview of the literature about UNESCO or the information society, the scholarly works that influenced this thesis most are mentioned at the beginning of each of the following three chapters and are used as references throughout this and other parts of the thesis.

organisation's role in the United Nations system and summarising some of the challenges it faces in the execution of its mandate. Moreover, it presents the role that academic and professional communities play for the decision-making and operational work of UNESCO and assesses how their particular status developed out of the debates during UNESCO's inception and early years.

Against the background of UNESCO's institutional context, the second chapter introduces the *history of UNESCO's activities in the field of information and communication*. By focusing on UNESCO's work prior to the period under scrutiny in this thesis, the chapter aims to pave the way for an understanding of how the organisation's later approach was influenced by the past. To this end, it presents UNESCO's programmes related to communication, information and informatics as three separate, though interrelated threads of activities that partially merged during the time in which UNESCO had to develop a convincing policy discourse on the information society. In addition, the chapter introduces the three professional communities which played a significant role for UNESCO's three programmes related to communication, information and informatics and which later also influenced its policy response to the information society.

Finally, the third and final chapter of this introductory part is dedicated to the *thematic background of UNESCO's response to the information society*. Accordingly, it introduces the historical origins of the theoretical debate on the information economy and the information society and discusses their influence on national and international policy debates during the 1990s. The chapter further presents the evolution of competing policy discourses on the information society and their culmination in the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003-2005. By doing so, the chapter aims to pave the way for an understanding of UNESCO's position, in particular in comparison to the discourses that other actors in the broad field of international communication and information policies developed with regard to the opportunities and threats of the digital age.

## 1. Institutional background: UNESCO as a specialised UN agency

*“The States Parties to this Constitution [...] are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other’s lives.”<sup>4</sup>*

In autumn 2015, UNESCO is celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its foundation as a specialised agency of the United Nations System. Since its creation in November 1945, UNESCO has been in charge of UN activities in the fields of education, culture, social and natural sciences, as well as communication and information — programme fields that are so vast and diverse that the organisation has been called “the least specialized of the specialized agencies” of the UN system.<sup>5</sup> The aim of its founding members was to create an international organisation that would assist post-war reconstruction, rooted in a philosophy of scientific humanism. For this purpose, the mandate of the new UN agency should cover all fields related to intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange and bring together the world’s leading experts and intellectuals to discuss urgent matter and find global solutions.

Today, UNESCO includes nearly 200 member states and observers and “prides itself in [...] being a philosophical think-tank that can convene the world’s intellectuals and civil society to deliberate humanity’s most pressing concerns”.<sup>6</sup> And indeed, intellectuals and civil society have played an important role for UNESCO’s policy-making throughout the organisation’s stormy history, and continue to do so. However, despite this close link to non-governmental actors, as part of the United Nations system, UNESCO is a member state-driven institution in which governments alone are in charge of binding decision-making regarding the main line of actions and budgetary concerns. Besides the vast fields of mandate, that are difficult to cover for a single agency, this tension between governmental interests and the overarching intellectual mission represent a second challenge that UNESCO has had to manage during its 70 years of existence.

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<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

<sup>5</sup> Peter I. Hajnal, *Guide to UNESCO* (London: Oceana Publications, 1983), 57, as cited by J.P. Singh, “Issue Structures and Deliberative Contexts: Is the WTO More Participatory than UNESCO?”, paper presented at the International Political Economy Society Meeting, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011, 9. In addition, due to its intellectual mandate, UNESCO has also been called the “least narrowly functional” of all specialised UN agencies, see Walter R. Sharp, “The Continuing Dilemmas of UNESCO”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 13, no. 3 (1969): 402.

<sup>6</sup> J.P. Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): Creating Norms for a Complex World* (Abington; New York: Routledge, 2011), 7.

A third challenge equally results from UNESCO's ambitious mandate and from the expectations of its increasing number of member states: From the very beginning, UNESCO had to find a balance between its abstract intellectual and normative actions and the more tangible operational activities "in the field", through which it provides concrete practical assistance to governments, civil society and citizens. Both the organisation's indecisiveness and the disagreement between its member states as to which of the two objectives UNESCO should focus on have had important repercussions for its actions in the field of information and communication and its policy discourse on the information society, under scrutiny in this thesis. Moreover, these factors have affected most of the organisation's activities and have thereby contributed to the misunderstandings and contentions that have accompanied UNESCO since its creation in 1945.

In order to better understand the organisation whose discourse on the societal consequences of digital technology are analysed in this thesis, this chapter provides a short introduction to UNESCO and to some of the multiple challenges the organisation has to face in the execution of its mandate. Over the last 70 years, UNESCO has been the subject of a large amount of scientific literature<sup>7</sup> and of many personal and institutional accounts by former staff members or other insiders.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the aim of this chapter cannot be to add another extensive portrayal of the organisation, its history and particularities. Instead, only those aspects of UNESCO that are relevant for the understanding of the analysis of its policy debate and discourse on the information society are introduced in this chapter. For this purpose, the chapter first introduces UNESCO's origins, mission and role in the United Nations system, including the tensions between the different facets of its mandate. It then briefly discusses the functioning of UNESCO's policy-making, including the role of its various governing bodies, before looking at the role of civil society in more detail and, in particular, at that of academic and professional experts for the decision-making and operational work of the organisation. Since experts

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<sup>7</sup> It would be impossible to list all interesting and relevant scientific literature about UNESCO. Some examples that were particularly informative for this thesis are Klaus Hübner and Wolfgang Reuther, eds., *UNESCO-Handbuch* (Bonn: UNO-Verlag, 2005); Chloé Maurel, *Histoire de l'Unesco: Les trente premières années 1945-1974* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 2010); James Patrick Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics: Engaging in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*; Clare Wells, *The UN, UNESCO and the Politics of Knowledge* (Houndsmills; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> The most interesting of these accounts are Chikh Békri, *L'Unesco: une entreprise erronée ?* (Paris: Editions Publisud, 1991); Yves Courier, *L'Unesco sans peine* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 2005); Richard Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants – UNESCO from within* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Julian Huxley, *UNESCO, Its Purpose and Its Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1947); UNESCO, ed., *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2006).

fundamentally contributed to the elaboration of a policy discourse on the information society, understanding their role and historical place in UNESCO is particularly important.

## 1.1 UNESCO's origins, mandate and role within the United Nations system

The idea for UNESCO's creation emerged during World War II when, in 1942, the Conference of Allied Ministers (CAME) began to meet in London and decided to institute an international organisation that would seek to end human violence through education. It is only against this historic background of war, terror and propaganda that UNESCO's philosophical aspirations can be understood. Shortly after the end of the war, in November 1945, representatives of 37 countries convened in London to institute this new educational and cultural organisation, with the objective of re-establishing the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" and preventing the outbreak of another global war. By proclaiming that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed"<sup>9</sup>, UNESCO's founding members wanted the new organisation to reflect universal values, most importantly peace, equality and human rights. They thereby primarily drew on ideas of the Enlightenment, although the philosophical roots of UNESCO's mandate can be led back to many important humanist and spiritual thinkers and have been interpreted and reinterpreted many times by UNESCO's Director-Generals and by outsiders.<sup>10</sup>

### An organisation for intellectual exchange

As much as it was inspired by the historic context and the legacy of humanistic philosophy, the new organisation's mandate was also shaped by the work and goals of the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IICI, after its French name *Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle*), which was created in 1924 and is often called UNESCO's predecessor. Set up in Paris and supported by the French government, the IICI served as the executive branch of the International Committee on Intellectual

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<sup>9</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

<sup>10</sup> The first long essay about UNESCO's philosophy was written as early as 1946 by its first Director-General Julian Huxley, see Huxley, *UNESCO*. The importance of peace and its philosophical foundations were reintroduced during the leadership of the Spanish Director-General Federico Mayor (1987-1999), most prominently in the context of his Culture of Peace programme.



Cooperation (ICIC), an advisory body of the League of Nations, which aimed to promote cultural and intellectual exchanges between scientists, researchers, teachers, artists and other intellectuals on an international level.<sup>11</sup> To this end, the ICIC was made up of, and consulted with, distinguished intellectuals such as Henri Bergson, Albert Einstein, Marie Curie, Béla Bartók, Thomas Mann, Paul Valéry, and others. It was due to their legacy that UNESCO was not simply created as an international organisation for peace but as the intellectual organisation of the United Nations.<sup>12</sup>

Very soon in the process, the governments involved in preparing the foundations of UNESCO had agreed that the new international organisation should centre on education and culture, the two fields already covered by the mandate of its predecessors. Yet, in order to cover the full range of intellectual activities and work towards the overarching goal of intellectual cooperation, it was eventually decided that the organisation should also focus on science and scientific exchanges. Thus, in the final draft texts of the constitution, an “S” for “Scientific” was added to the initial title UNECO (United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation).

As the policy scholar J.P. Singh remarks in his institutional assessment of UNESCO, “it is interesting that the drafters of the UNESCO Constitution understood the word ‘scientific’ and its inclusion in the organization’s name as a philosophical rather than a technical move”.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, promoted by the British scientist and philosopher Julian Huxley, UNESCO’s first Director-General (1946-48), the scientific mandate of UNESCO had to be understood in a very broad sense, with science referring to all intellectual activities, including knowledge and education.<sup>14</sup> In this spirit, both human and social as well as natural sciences are until today part of UNESCO’s programme and agenda, although they are certainly less prominent than the organisation’s activities in the field of culture and education.

Communication and information, UNESCO’s fifth and last programme field, is even less publicly known, despite often being a source and reason of political controversies that have affected the organisation as a whole. This field, like the field of science, was added to

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<sup>11</sup> For the intellectual history of UNESCO’s predecessors, see Roger-Pol Droit, *Humanity in the Making. Overview of the Intellectual History of UNESCO 1945-2005* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2005), 30ff. See also Jean-Jacques Renoliet, “L’UNESCO oubliée: l’Organisation de Coopération Intellectuelle (1921-1946)”, in *60 ans d’histoire de l’UNESCO. Actes du colloque international, Paris, 16-18 Novembre 2005*, ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO, 2007), 61-66; Bécri, *L’Unesco: une entreprise erronée ?*, 25ff.

<sup>12</sup> Vincent Citot, “L’UNESCO: paix savante ou politique ?”, *Sens Public. International Web Journal* (16 April 2006), <http://www.sens-public.org/spip.php?article259> (last accessed 16 September 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Huxley, *UNESCO*, 25f; Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 14.

the agenda towards the end of the CAME negotiations regarding UNESCO's inception; however, unlike science, it did not become part of the organisation's name and acronym. It was the United States —via the UN— that pushed for the inclusion of media and freedom of information into the new organisation's mandate. But although the United States promoted the free flow of information as a means for intellectual cooperation, many Eastern European and other Communist governments dismissed it as a Western propaganda strategy, which added to the early political tensions within UNESCO. Until today, communication and information has remained the least prominent yet most contested field of UNESCO's mandate.<sup>15</sup>

### **An organisation for intellectuals or for peoples?**

UNESCO's intellectual mandate was not only characterised by its overarching mission and programme fields but also by the organisation's close connection to the “intellectual elite” of its member states. From the beginning of UNESCO's preparation, endless discussions had taken place regarding whether the new organisation should focus on operational activities in its member states or, rather, whether it should represent a lieu for intellectual encounters among recognised experts, philosophers and thinkers. UNESCO's founding members were well aware that they needed the financial and strategic support of governments if the organisation was to survive and receive the attention needed to make an impact. Yet, as the German diplomat Walter Gehlhoff remarked, they also knew that they needed to involve independent and critical thinkers in order to live up to the new organisation's intellectual mandate.<sup>16</sup>

The result of this discrepancy was a compromise, fixed in article V of the 1945 constitution, which stipulated that UNESCO's operational governing body, the Executive Board, should be composed of independent personalities and intellectuals instead of diplomats and governmental representatives.<sup>17</sup> With this move, UNESCO's founders tried to preserve the spirit of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation and to strengthen the ideological autonomy of the new organisation. At the same time, by

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<sup>15</sup> The controversies around UNESCO's mandate and work in the fields of information and communication are discussed in great detail in the following historical chapter 2 (see here page 52ff).

<sup>16</sup> Walter Gehlhoff, “Krise und Wandel der UNESCO”, *Zeitschrift für Internationale Politik EUROPA-ARCHIV* 47 (10 October 1992): 565.

<sup>17</sup> The initial wording of article V of UNESCO's constitution stipulated that members of the Executive Board should be “persons competent in the arts, the humanities, the sciences, education and the diffusion of ideas, and qualified by their experience and capacity”, as cited by Richard Hoggart, “UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir”, in *“The Conscience of the World”. The Influence of Non-Governmental Organisations in the UN System*, ed. Peter Willetts (London: Hurst, 1996), 99.

setting up UNESCO as an intergovernmental organisation, controlled and financed by its member states, the governments involved in its foundation also introduced much stronger control over the intellectual autonomy than they had previously had in UNESCO's predecessor:

“Attitude bien compréhensible à la vue des atrocités de la guerre, qu’il convient de bannir définitivement en éduquant les esprits aux valeurs de la Charte des Nations Unies. Il n’est plus question de laisser aux intellectuels une autonomie absolue, même sur des questions intellectuelles. Ayant pris conscience de l’importance de ces questions, la communauté internationale va d’une part trouver des financements jusque là inespérés pour ces organisations culturelles, et d’autre part exiger qu’elles rendent des comptes aux États qui les financent. Non seulement elles devront rendre des comptes, mais elles seront essentiellement contrôlées par les États eux-mêmes.”<sup>18</sup>

During the early years, the list of personalities involved in UNESCO's work read like a “Who's Who's of Twentieth Century thought”<sup>19</sup> including scientist and intellectuals such as Julian Huxley, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jean Paul Sartre, Wole Soyinka and Sarvepali Radhakrishnan. However, after less than a decade, the importance and impact of prominent thinkers was severely restricted. In 1954, a constitutional reform made the members of the Executive Board representatives of their national governments rather than independent intellectuals. They were, however, still elected *ad personam*. Hence, instead of aiming to serve the general interest through intellectual exchange, the board members' judgements and decisions were now officially constrained by the interests of their countries of origin.

Since then, the independence of UNESCO's Executive Board has progressively been further reduced. In 1976, it was decided that all board members could be revoked by their governments if they did not accurately represent their national interests.<sup>20</sup> Seventeen years later—in 1993 and thus at the beginning of the period under scrutiny in this thesis—another constitutional change added to the increase of governmental influence: instead of electing personalities *ad personam* to the Executive Board, who then represent the national interests of their countries of origin, the member states' community decided to elect countries as members of the Executive Board.<sup>21</sup> This set an end to the intellectual independence of UNESCO's governing bodies and its members and can therefore be considered a degradation of its intellectual mandate in general. In addition, it significantly

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<sup>18</sup> Citot, “L'UNESCO”, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Singh, “Issue Structures and Deliberative Contexts: Is the WTO More Participatory than UNESCO?”, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Citot, “L'UNESCO”, 8.

<sup>21</sup> Hoggart, “UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir”, 99.

increased the influence and control of member states on decisions regarding the operational activities of the organisation.

The governmental control over *operational* tasks is relevant for UNESCO's intellectual aspirations insofar as it increased the tensions between the different objectives that the organisations tried to achieve. While in UNESCO's early years all priority was given to intellectual cooperation, the task of technical cooperation was soon added to this first objective, mainly when many developing countries reached independence during the 1960s and demanded practical assistance from the various UN agencies, including UNESCO.<sup>22</sup> As UNESCO's former staff member Yves Courier observed, since this period, the discrepancy between these two different objectives has resulted in visible conflicts within UNESCO since intellectual and technical cooperation are often seen as incompatible:

“The Organization has been wondering since the 1960s whether, from the institutional point of view, the objective of international cooperation is compatible with that of assistance to developing countries and whether, from the operational point of view, priority in terms of efforts and resources should be given to the first or second objective.”<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, it has often been argued that UNESCO's operational activities could even improve its intellectual work by serving as “a sort of phenomenological roughage, a tethering to reality”.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the proof that the organisation is able to provide practical assistance to its member states would increase the legitimacy of UNESCO's intellectual and normative actions. For this reason, technical coordination and concrete development assistance were progressively added to UNESCO's regular programme and integrated into the official mandate. Consequently, although UNESCO's fields of mandate have not fundamentally changed since the organisation's foundation in 1945, one can consider that its “intellectual nature” has been weakened due to constitutional changes altering the composition of its governing bodies as well as the introduction and temporary priority given to more operational activities.

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<sup>22</sup> For details about the introduction of operational activities into UNESCO's regular programme, see Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 31ff.

<sup>23</sup> Yves Courier, “The Specific Nature of UNESCO”, Task Force on UNESCO in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 1999, [http://www.unesco.org/webworld/taskforce21/documents/colombie\\_en.rtf](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/taskforce21/documents/colombie_en.rtf) (last accessed 25 June 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 92.

## Between values and norms

One of the reasons for the shift to more operational activities was the difficulty of translating UNESCO's intellectual mandate into tangible actions. While its constitution's text is particularly extensive on the subject of the organisation's humanistic ideas and ethical objectives, the description of its purposes and functions remains rather abstract. Apart from the encouragement and institutionalisation of all sorts of cooperation in the intellectual spheres, the constitutional text does not give many indications on how to operationalise these ambitious objectives. Consequently, it has often been argued that the ultimate goal of UNESCO is not the achievement of any tangible results, but the pure representation of the international communities' idealistic ambition of universal peace and mutual understanding:

“If we wish to understand UNESCO, we must set aside its numerous activities, its symposia, its offices, its codes and rituals, its voluminous publications and its website and consider only its underlying idea. In the same excessive vein, we would say that, essentially, UNESCO is an intangible organization. It is founded solely on ethical values. Ideals are its only objectives. This is the first thing that needs to be borne in mind if we wish to start to grasp its specificity.”<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, over the years, UNESCO has found ways to break its overarching intellectual mandate down and translate it into five main functions that the organisation is to fulfil in the execution of its programme activities. Whether the various actions carried out by the five programme sectors successfully contribute to this fulfilment has often been questioned. However, their categorisation is interesting for the analysis of this thesis since, in the empirical Part III, UNESCO's elaboration of a policy discourse on the information society is divided into different episodes, each representing one or two of these different functions.<sup>26</sup>

First of all, in order to contribute to intellectual cooperation, UNESCO is supposed to function as a “laboratory of ideas”. This means that the organisation should foster the dialogue on ethical values and philosophical principles by playing “a key role in anticipating and defining, in the light of the ethical principles, [...] the most important emerging problems in its spheres of competence and in identifying appropriate strategies and policies to deal with them”.<sup>27</sup> The operationalisation of this function is closely linked to the second one, which consists in the objective that UNESCO should take over the role of a “clearing house” for the international community by facilitating the exchange

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<sup>25</sup> Droit, *Humanity in the Making*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> This division and the functions that correspond to these episodes of the discourse development are introduced at the beginning of Part III (see here page 189ff).

<sup>27</sup> See <http://erc.unesco.org/websitetoolkit/en/texts/index.htm> (last accessed 30 October 2014).

among professionals, academics and governments in order to discuss and find concrete solutions for the identified problems. Therefore, part of this “clearing house” function is to organise “international conferences, [where] world experts also elaborate new and common approaches to the major issues confronting UNESCO and Member States mobilise their talents and resources to attain common objectives”.<sup>28</sup> By addressing the challenge of fostering intellectual exchange, these two functions serve the most abstract of UNESCO’s objectives, namely the achievement of its humanistic ideals.

In contrast to this, the third and fourth functions are more concrete, directly addressing the operational activities that the organisation should carry out in order to promote and foster culture, education, science and communication in and among its member states. On the one hand, UNESCO is supposed to do this by serving as a “catalyst for international cooperation”, which refers to UNESCO’s role for developing “cooperation in its fields of competence, for the convergence of work which otherwise would be dispersed” and for “the stimulation of personal contacts among specialists” and the dissemination of knowledge.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, UNESCO should function as a “capacity builder in member states” by “building human and institutional capacities” and working towards “the development of policies, national strategies, projects, feasibility studies, [and] raising funds for their execution, and finally evaluation”.<sup>30</sup> Hence, complementing the purely intellectual tasks these functions express UNESCO’s ambition to provide practical, technical and educational assistance on the ground, in particular in and to those member states that are in need of it.

While the first four functions already express UNESCO’s double-sided mission, it is the fifth and final one which adds an interesting—and in many ways even more concrete—dimension to its mandate: it states that UNESCO should serve as a “standard-setter” by “serving as a central forum for articulating the ethical, normative and intellectual issues of our time, fostering multi-disciplinary exchange and mutual understanding, working—where possible and desirable—towards universal agreements on these issues, benchmarking targets and mobilising international opinion”.<sup>31</sup>

This expresses the objective of translating the intellectual reflections about world problems into concrete international instruments, adopted by UNESCO’s member states community, an objective which had been part of UNESCO’s mission since its

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

foundation. As a matter of fact, UNESCO's normative function was given a very prominent role under the first article of its constitution, which calls upon the organisation to "recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image" and to maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge by "[...] recommending to the nations concerned the necessary international conventions".<sup>32</sup> In addition, article IV explicitly mentions the preparation of standard-setting instruments, such as recommendations and conventions, as one of UNESCO's core activities.

As proposed by Abdulqawi Yusuf, former director of UNESCO's Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs, the emphasis given to normative functions in the constitution may have been inspired by the activities undertaken by UNESCO's predecessor IICI, just like the philosophical nature of its mandate and the close relation to intellectuals.<sup>33</sup> After long and arduous debates about UNESCO's role and the purpose of its normative tasks, the procedure for establishing international instruments was instead based on the guidelines adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).<sup>34</sup>

Although UNESCO's 1945 constitution only mentions two main types of international instruments at UNESCO, there are in fact three, with varying degrees of force. Part of UNESCO's development of a policy discourse on the information society was the debate about which of these instruments would be the most adequate for formulating a consensus statement among its member states about the societal impact of digital technology. For this reason, UNESCO's normative function and the different types of international instruments are of importance for this thesis.

First of all, UNESCO's member states can agree on *declarations*, which are international statements of good intent that do not need to be signed by the adhering governments and, therefore, do not have any legal force. Although they equally remain only voluntary,

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<sup>32</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

<sup>33</sup> Abdulqawi Yusuf, ed., *Standard-Setting in UNESCO. Normative Action in Education, Science and Culture* (Paris; Leiden; Boston: UNESCO Publishing & Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2007), 15. During its short period of existence, the IICI was responsible for two major international conventions, the Convention to Facilitate the International Circulation of Films of an Educational Nature, which entered into force in January 1935 and the International Convention concerning the Use of Broadcasting for Peace adopted in 1936, which sought to promote good relations between nations by avoiding tendentious broadcasts that could undermine international understanding.

<sup>34</sup> Abdulqawi Yusuf, "UNESCO Practices and Procedures for the Elaboration of Standardsetting Instruments", in *Standard-Setting in UNESCO. Normative Action in Education, Science and Culture*, ed. Abdulqawi Yusuf (Paris; Leiden; Boston: UNESCO Publishing & Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2007), 32ff. For a detailed description of the procedure for drafting international instruments at UNESCO, see Constanze Zahm, "Die Einordnung von UNESCO-Rechtsakten. Conventions, recommendations, declarations, decisions, resolutions", ed. Sabine von Schorlemer, *Beiträge des UNESCO-Lehrstuhls für Internationale Beziehungen* 5 (2013): 9ff, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:14-qucosa-129319> (last accessed 5 August 2015).

non-binding instruments, *recommendations* are slightly more detailed and precise than declarations. They serve as a code of good practice, thereby leaving governments the room for interpretation and selective application. The only UNESCO instruments that are binding for the governments signing on them are *conventions*. Indeed, once a proposed convention is ratified by a sufficient number of member states, it enters into force and should, consequently, have the status of international law. Although they are the UNESCO Secretariat's preferred instruments, UNESCO's member states are often reluctant to agree on the preparation of a convention and instead give priority to other instruments that are less compulsory.<sup>35</sup> In addition to these three specific types of instruments, the organisation can also conclude many different types of agreements.

Despite the high number of legal instruments that the organisation has adopted during its 70 years of existence<sup>36</sup>, these measures were regularly criticised as futile attempts that look “more like an exercise in international public relations than a genuine advance in world law”.<sup>37</sup> In particular, it is often emphasised that the preparation and adoption of these instruments will only lead to results if they are subsequently ratified and implemented by the member states, which is often not the case.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the well-known examples of UNESCO instruments, such as the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in 1972 or the more recent Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights adopted in 1997, show that these instruments can have an impact and successfully translate the organisation's philosophical aspirations into concrete measures, if done the right way.

Therefore, instead of framing UNESCO's operational, normative and purely intellectual activities as conflictual, many argue that it is only through the combination of all these functions that the organisation can potentially live up to its ambitious mission. And as the empirical Part III shows in detail, for the elaboration of a convincing policy discourse on the information society, whether deliberate or not, the organisation tried to implement all three types of activities.

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<sup>35</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 38. See also Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 20ff.

<sup>36</sup> In 2013, a report to the General Conference lists more than 70 legal instruments adopted under UNESCO's auspices. See UNESCO, “Monitoring of the implementation of UNESCO's standard-setting instruments. Comprehensive report by the Director-General on UNESCO's standard-setting instruments”, 37 C/INF.7, 29 October 2013 (UNESDOC).

<sup>37</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 40.

<sup>38</sup> The lack of follow-up was, for instance, criticised in 2007 by UNESCO's then Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura in the foreword to UNESCO's large volume on its own standard-setting activities, see Yusuf, ed., *Standard-Setting in UNESCO*, 11.



## 1.2 UNESCO's functioning and policy-making

The constitution adopted in 1945 not only spelt out the mandate and functions of UNESCO but also the tasks of its different governing bodies as well as their interrelations. With a limited number of member states and manageable amount of work, back then, these tasks were certainly less complicated to coordinate than they are today. In 2015, in order to carry out its programme activities, currently divided into five programme sectors (Education, Culture, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and, lastly, Communication and Information), the organisation not only needs to reach consensus among its 195 member states<sup>39</sup>; it also has to assure the collaboration of around 2000 staff members, located at the Headquarters in Paris and in 65 field and liaison offices around the world. The organisation's main lines of work are decided upon and controlled by its two governing bodies, the General Conference and the Executive Board, and translated into concrete actions by the Secretariat and the Director-General. In addition, UNESCO draws on an extensive network of civil society and professional organisations as well as National Commissions in most of its member states. All these institutions and actors were very much involved in developing a policy discourse on the information society; their composition and interrelation are therefore relevant for the understanding of this thesis.

### UNESCO's organisational design

Since its inception, UNESCO has divided its decision-making powers between two governing bodies. The most important and powerful body is the General Conference, which meets every two years for its regular sessions.<sup>40</sup> It is in charge of all general budgetary decisions and programmatic agenda-setting. In addition, it elects the members of the Executive Board and, every four years, appoints the Director-General. To this end, the General Conference is attended by representatives of all member states and associate members of UNESCO as well as observers from non-member states, other intergovernmental organisations and NGOs.<sup>41</sup> Each member state has one vote, which is

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<sup>39</sup> As of May 2015, UNESCO counts 195 member states, with Palestine and South Sudan having been the last ones to join, in 2011.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to the regular sessions of the General Conference, the organisation has made use of the right for extraordinary sessions four times, in 1948, 1953, 1973 and 1982.

<sup>41</sup> For a vivid and ironic description of the General Conference sessions, their complexity and dynamics and for details about procedures and involved costs, see Courier, *L'Unesco sans peine*, 271ff; Pierre de Senarclens, *La crise des Nations Unies* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988), 175ff. For an anthropological, but equally humorous account, see also Phillip Rousseau, "Les cultures fragiles.

independent of its size or budgetary contribution. This is a crucial rule as it significantly influences the power relation within UNESCO. However, nowadays, as in other UN agencies, normative decisions at UNESCO usually are made by consensus rather than by vote, and are, therefore, preceded by negotiation processes that are often long and arduous. This also includes the adoption of international instruments, which makes the preparatory work and preliminary deliberations even more important.<sup>42</sup>

While the General Conference sets the overarching agenda, it is up to the Executive Board to implement the General Conference's decision, to determine the concrete programmes and budgetary allocations, and to ensure the overall management of UNESCO. For this purpose, it meets every six months and is currently composed of 58 members, who are elected for four-year terms by the General Conference. Since it is more flexible due to the limited membership and closer to the concrete work carried out by the organisation, the Executive Board serves as a link between the Secretariat and the General Conference. In addition, as mentioned before, in UNESCO's early years, the board members were well-recognised personalities, selected for their intellectual achievements and expertise; however, following the wish for more governmental influence, they were replaced by government representatives of member states. Nevertheless, instead of only being tied by the interests of their national government, in theory, board members are supposed to represent the geographical and cultural diversity of their region of origin.<sup>43</sup> In between the governing bodies' sessions, most member states are present at UNESCO's Headquarters via their permanent delegations, which are usually headed by an ambassador and which build the link between the organisation and the governments in their respective capitals.

With the two governing bodies in charge of all decision-making, it is the third constitutional organ of UNESCO, the Secretariat, which is responsible for the programme activities and the day-to-day management of the organisation. The 2000 or so staff members, half of whom are located at the headquarters in Paris, are organised in a highly hierarchical and bureaucratic structure, headed by the Director-General (DG) and

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L'UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)", PhD thesis in Social Sciences, Université de Montréal, 2011, 18ff.

<sup>42</sup> The importance of the preparatory work becomes apparent in the analysis of UNESCO's work on a recommendation on cyberspace, included in Part III (see here page 323ff).

<sup>43</sup> Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 32. In his humorous introduction to UNESCO, Yves Courrier dedicates a long chapter to the functioning and dynamics of the Executive Board, see Courrier, *L'Unesco sans peine*, 251.

his Assistant Director-Generals (ADGs).<sup>44</sup> Besides the two Support Sectors for Administration and External Relations and several central services, the Secretariat is divided into five programme sectors. Each sector is further divided into thematic divisions, each of which is composed of several sections and headed by a director, who is subordinated to the ADG in charge of the sector.

Although it is merely supposed to carry out the decisions of the member state community, channelled via the General Conference and the Executive Board, the Secretariat and its staff are an autonomous entity which represents the heart of UNESCO. The intellectual and operational performance of the various sectors and divisions stands and falls with the individuals carrying out the daily work and their relationships. All together they form a dynamic ensemble that, due to cultural differences, personal and institutional rivalries and internal strife, is influenced by many more factors than just the interests and agreements of member states:

“The internal life of the Secretariat is exceptionally intense and inbred; UNESCO Headquarters is a cocoon, a hothouse, a vast and uneasy hamsters’ nest. For many members of staff UNESCO and its internal affairs form a total world, a continuous drama almost wholly concerned with the staff’s own common life.”<sup>45</sup>

In order to understand how the organisation and its policy-making function, one needs to understand, or at least to try to understand, the internal dynamics of the Secretariat and its members. Not all of them are necessarily specialists for the content-related topics they work on, but many staff members are general administrators who acquire the necessary expertise after their recruitment for a certain position. Thus, it is rather common that staff members move between the different programme sectors, thereby changing their field of expertise, for instance, from education to culture.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, the organisation tries to attract scientists and professional experts and constantly hires external consultants with particular competences. The high number of temporary staff only adds to the

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<sup>44</sup> For the last decades, in particular during the leadership of Director-General Matsuura, the organisation has been trying to reduce the top-heavy hierarchy and the overly complex and little transparent bureaucracy by reducing the number of staff, in particular of directors, and of field offices. In addition, it tried to improve the hiring processes for new competent officials and to cut on nepotism. See Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 36. For detailed examples of bad practices adding to the inefficiency of the Secretariat, see Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 120ff; and Senarclens, *La crise des Nations Unies*, 192ff.

<sup>45</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 112. For a highly interesting in-depth study of UNESCO’s staff, their internal relationships, their history and influence on the organisation as a whole see Meryll David-Ismaïl, “Les Fonctionnaires Internationaux: Un groupe non professionnalisé ? La formation du groupe des fonctionnaires de l’UNESCO comme analyseur des rapports de domination à l’échelle internationale”, PhD thesis in Political Sciences, Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 119ff.

complexity of the Secretariat's working procedures and decision-making and makes it even more difficult to unravel the many strings of the organisation's internal functioning.

The Secretariat is headed by the Director-General who, just like the Secretariat itself, implements and operationalises the decisions of the two governing bodies. Yet, being at the top of the hierarchy, he has far more room for interpreting these decisions, without overruling them, and for taking independent political decisions. Moreover, he is the only staff member who is elected and has the power to appoint all other members. As the many historical accounts of UNESCO show, the organisation's different Director-Generals have used the power that comes with their ambivalent position to various degrees, and their power claims have been met with more or less criticism and resentments by UNESCO's member states and staff members.<sup>47</sup> Most interestingly, many commentators see a link between the position and strength of a Director-General and the increasing politicisation that UNESCO has experienced during its 70 years of existence — a process which is of high importance for the understanding of UNESCO's history and, more particularly, for the understanding of this thesis' subject.

### **UNESCO: A technical or political organisation?**

At the time of UNESCO's foundation, many governments —most prominently the United States— claimed that the organisation should not get involved in politics itself.<sup>48</sup> Like many other UN specialised agencies, UNESCO was to be an “apolitical” body, which dedicates itself to content-related questions and leaves all political debates to the United Nations as the only “political” body of the international system.<sup>49</sup> However, UNESCO's founding members also decided to establish the new organisation on an intergovernmental basis, with proper policy-making organs that act independently from the United Nations. Thanks to this policy autonomy that all UN specialised agencies have in common, UNESCO and its member states are able to determine the organisation's own policies and to define its main lines of action, without the need to respect any greater authority via the UN General Assembly (UNGA). Consequently, as Clare Wells states in

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<sup>47</sup> For extensive descriptions of the Director-General's role and position as well as different reports on the performance of the various personalities holding this post, see for example Courier, *L'Unesco sans peine*, 229; Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 136ff; Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> William Jr. Preston, Edward S. Herman, and Herbert Schiller, *Hope and Folly: The United States and Unesco, 1945-1985* (Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 41.

<sup>49</sup> Wells, *The UN, UNESCO and the Politics of Knowledge*, 45.

her extensive study about the international politics of knowledge, “the Specialised Agencies of the UN, and thus UNESCO, may reasonably be regarded not merely as technical adjuncts to the UN or as executors of policies determined by the latter, but as ‘political’ bodies in their own right.”<sup>50</sup> As a matter of fact, with the decision to endow UNESCO with intergovernmental governing bodies, its founding members opened the door for political and ideological debates, instead of purely intellectual or technical exchanges, and thereby introduced the most important difference between UNESCO and its predecessors.<sup>51</sup>

In contrast to its peaceful mission, UNESCO has never been spared political confrontations between its member states. As early as its inception, the controversies about the mission, tasks and organisational set-up of UNESCO strongly reflected the Cold War tensions of that time, with the Soviets backing out of the negotiations and other Communist countries withdrawing from the new organisation during the first years. Although they re-joined only a few years later, the ideological and political tensions of the Cold War continued to accompany UNESCO over the first 45 years of its existence.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, like most other UN agencies, UNESCO was impacted by additional sources of international conflict, such as post-colonial politics, the neo-liberal policy agendas of some member states, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The latter caused UNESCO’s most recent crisis in 2011, when several member states suspended their funding after the organisation officially accepted Palestine as a member state.<sup>53</sup>

The biggest storm that UNESCO had to weather during its 70 years of existence was related to a combination of these political conflicts. It emerged in the 1970s and 1980s when many developing countries had gained political independence from the former colonial powers and started to strive for more economic, cultural and informational autonomy. Strongly supported by the Soviets and other Communist governments, these countries chose UNESCO as a forum for their political claims related to cultural domination and the overrepresentation of Western information and media content on the global level. This movement for a New World Information and Communication Order

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>51</sup> Békri, *L’Unesco: une entreprise erronée ?*, 12.

<sup>52</sup> The literature about the impact of the Cold War on UNESCO is very vast. Some good examples are Gail Archibald, *Les Etats-Unis et l’Unesco, 1944-1963: les rêves peuvent-ils résister à la réalité des relations internationales?* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1993); Julian Behrstock, *The Eighth Case: Troubled Times at the United Nations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); Békri, *L’Unesco: une entreprise erronée ?*; Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*; Senarclens, *La crise des Nations Unies*.

<sup>53</sup> Meryll David-Ismayil, “Les Etats-Unis et l’UNESCO, quarante ans de relations mouvementées”, *Mediapart*, 18 November 2011, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/edition/les-invites-de-mediapart/article/181111/les-etats-unis-et-lunesco-quarante-ans-de-relat> (last accessed 4 June 2015).

(NWICO), which is of high relevance for the period under scrutiny in this thesis and therefore discussed in greater detail later on, was countered by Western countries with fierce resistance. Accusing UNESCO of supporting and defending Communist ideas, the United States eventually withdrew from the organisation in 1984, followed by the United Kingdom and Singapore, depriving the organisation of about one third of its budget from one moment to the next. As well as causing a financial and organisational crisis from which UNESCO never fully recovered, they also delivered the last proof—if one was needed—that an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO can never be apolitical.

Ironically, during this crisis, the countries that now accused UNESCO of becoming too politicised were precisely those which had called for it to be established as an intergovernmental organisation in the first place. Yet, the phenomenon of “politicisation”, which is understood in this context as “the distortion of [a] debate by the irrelevant introduction of political issues”<sup>54</sup>, was not just a UNESCO-specific problem. Instead, during the Cold War period, many of the UN agencies were considered to have become increasingly politicised “through the introduction of issues designed to attain political ends extraneous to the substantive, technical purpose and programs for which [they] were established”.<sup>55</sup> After their introduction, the political ends steered the debate away from the underlying factual situation and the actual content-related, technical or—in UNESCO’s case—often ethical problems and made it even more challenging for the organisations to reach any kind of agreement or consensus among the conflicting parties.<sup>56</sup>

It is often argued that this was particularly true for UNESCO, which, due to its ethical and intellectual mandate, is much more sensitive to political tensions and the politicisation of certain policy issues than more technical organisations.<sup>57</sup> While the latter would base their work on more factual knowledge and dispose of more professional and specialised staff, UNESCO would more easily get caught up in ideological confrontations and cultural differences. Moreover, UNESCO’s mandate is specifically to serve as a laboratory of ideas, to stimulate the debate on values and to serve as a forum for finding consensus

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<sup>54</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 58.

<sup>55</sup> David A. Kay, “On the Reform of International Institutions: A Comment”, *International Organization* 30, no. 3 (1976): 533f, as cited by Wells, *The UN, UNESCO and the Politics of Knowledge*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> The politicisation of UNESCO and other UN agencies has been a subject to a lot of scholarly work, see for instance Békri, *L’Unesco: une entreprise erronée ?*; Sagarika Dutt, *The Politicization of the United Nations Specialized Agencies: A Case Study of UNESCO* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen University Press, 1995); Senarclens, *La crise des Nations Unies*; Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics*.

<sup>57</sup> Wells, *The UN, UNESCO and the Politics of Knowledge*, 4.

on societal, ethical and normative questions, which are, by nature, controversial and often highly political issues. Hence, unlike other UN agencies, UNESCO could not avoid or cut these debates short as they were and are an intrinsic part of the organisation's overarching mission:

“En tant qu'entité intellectuelle et culturelle de la communauté internationale, l'UNESCO enregistre tous les débats mondiaux comme une caisse de résonance. Cependant, en tant qu'agence de l'ONU, elle n'est habilitée ni à trancher ni à s'auto-saisir : elle ne peut que refléter les tensions qui existent et se faire l'écho des voix contradictoires. Les étouffer serait contraire à son mandat. Paradoxalement c'est cela qui la met sous le feu des critiques : il est plus facile de 'tirer sur le messenger' que sur le message.”<sup>58</sup>

For this reason, both politicisation and ideological confrontations have always necessarily had a proper place within UNESCO as they are “inherent in the very nature of [its] constitutional mandate”.<sup>59</sup> Due to the undecidable nature of the issues the organisation is dealing with, many of the debates during its General Conference and Executive Board cannot lead to any clear conclusions. This can be frustrating for the member states involved, but it is even more so for the members of the Secretariat who prepare these debates and whose daily work is directly influenced by the governing bodies' decisions — or their indecisiveness. Yet, the undecidable character of UNESCO's topics can also lead to stimulating intellectual exchanges and surprising consensus on normative questions, which after all are the organisation's ultimate goal:

“Discussion on the qualitative objectives of education, the place of art in society and the need for a philosophy division at UNESCO can be endless. Decisions will always leave some people dissatisfied and can always be called into question. On the other hand, a *conflictual* theme can spark off debate, but it always comes to a conclusion, most frequently after compromises have been reached, with a decision to which the parties hold [emphasis in original].”<sup>60</sup>

To sum up, by endowing UNESCO with its proper intergovernmental governing bodies, giving it the policy autonomy of a UN specialised agency and, in addition, establishing it with a highly ambitious but inherently conflictual mandate, its founding members planted the seed for the organisation's later politicisation. Some commentators therefore called all claims contradictory, requesting that UNESCO abandon politicised debates and return to

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<sup>58</sup> Divina Frau-Meigs, “Le retour des Etats-Unis à l'UNESCO”, *Annuaire français de relations internationales* 5 (2004): 869.

<sup>59</sup> William Jr. Preston, “The History of U.S.-UNESCO Relations”, in *Hope and Folly: The United States and Unesco, 1945-1985*, ed. William Jr. Preston, Edward S. Herman, and Herbert I. Schiller (Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 188.

<sup>60</sup> Courier, “The Specific Nature of UNESCO”.

its original mandate. In fact, according to them, “politicization is not ‘a defect to be corrected’ but a fact of multilateral, organizational life and part and parcel of the ‘planetary bargaining’ over the proper means to achieve UNESCO’s idealistic ends”.<sup>61</sup>

### 1.3 The role of experts and epistemic communities for UNESCO

The attention of member states, observers and scholars on the politicisation of UNESCO must not hide the fact that the political debates and activities only represent a small proportion of the organisation’s overall activity and spending. In fact, the daily work of the Secretariat concerns the implementation of programmes and the development of projects and strategies, and certainly consumes much more of UNESCO’s energy and budget than the few controversial and highly politicised activities. But in contrast to these few exceptions, the bulk of UNESCO’s work is often disregarded by its member states and, even more, by outsiders — and this precisely because of its apolitical and less controversial character.<sup>62</sup>

Yet, it is primarily the apolitical and less contested part of UNESCO’s activities that is of most relevance for those communities that the organisation was created to connect, namely the scientists, professionals and academic experts working in the fields covered by UNESCO’s mandate. Together these communities form a group of actors that are just as important for the organisation as the community of its member states. For this reason, Hoggart calls them “the second constituency” of UNESCO:

“One constituency is the Member States, expressing their interests through the General Conference, the Executive Board and their Permanent Delegations in Paris. The other constituency is made up of groups of institutions and individuals who are concerned to keep UNESCO up to the mark in its intellectual and scientific work.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Preston, “The History of U.S.-UNESCO Relations”, 189. Citing Gene M. Lyons, David A. Baldwin, and Donald W. McNemar, “The ‘Politicization’ Issue in the UN Specialized Agencies”, *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 32, no. 4 (1 January 1977): 86ff.

<sup>62</sup> Preston, “The History of U.S.-UNESCO Relations”, 190.

<sup>63</sup> Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 60.



## The role of epistemic communities

There are two ways in which scientific and professional communities are involved in UNESCO's work and policy-making. On the one hand, many —although certainly not all— of the international civil servants and temporary staff members working in and for the UNESCO Secretariat are professionals of the fields covered by the organisation's mandate, namely social and natural scientist, librarians, journalists, ethnologists, philosophers etc. On the other hand, the members of the Secretariat collaborate in their daily work with “like-minded professionals” who are not employed by the organisation, but are either linked to it through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that hold a consultative status with UNESCO, or are part of advisory panels of experts.<sup>64</sup> Together, the experts working inside the organisation and those working in concert with them often form a group of professionals united by a shared commitment to causal models and political values. They are therefore often described as “epistemic communities”.

Although the various understandings of the concept of “epistemic communities” differ, the most common interpretation draws on the American political scientist Peter Haas' definition of a “network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area.”<sup>65</sup> For Haas, these experts do not necessarily need to come from the same discipline, but in order to form an epistemic community, they have to share normative, principled and causal beliefs, which derive from their professional experience and analysis and serve as the epistemic basis for linking possible policy actions and desired outcomes. In addition, these experts need to share a common policy enterprise related to their professional competence, which is presumably derived from a shared conviction that human welfare would be enhanced if the model based on their beliefs was translated into policy.<sup>66</sup>

The belief in common principles and policy enterprises can be a feature of many groups involved in policy-making, such as economic interest groups or lobbying coalitions. Yet, epistemic communities distinguish themselves from these groups through the “authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge in a particular domain [which] is based

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<sup>64</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge Is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 40.

<sup>65</sup> Peter M. Haas, “Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination”, *International Organization* 46, no. 01 (1992): 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. The understanding in this thesis follows Haas by not limiting the concept of “epistemic communities” to experts of natural sciences who share their belief in scientific methods and their ability to generate truth. Instead, epistemic communities can consist of social scientists or individuals from any discipline or profession with a sufficiently strong claim to a recognised body of knowledge (ibid., 16).

on their recognized expertise within that domain”.<sup>67</sup> For this reason, they are of particular value for institutions such as the specialised agencies of the UN: they do not simply lobby their interests in order to influence the policy decisions of the organisation, but actually help these organisations to identify interests and points for negotiation, frame issues for the collective debate and propose specific policy solution based on the knowledge base common in the field the various UN agencies are concerned with.

While this close link between international organisations and field-specific epistemic communities is a feature of all UN specialised agencies, the relationship between UNESCO, experts, and professional organisations has often been recognised as being particularly close.<sup>68</sup> On the one hand, this is due to UNESCO’s intellectual mandate, of which the collaboration with and the fostering of cooperation among different professional and intellectual communities is an essential element. On the other hand, this close relationship has its roots in the debates that led to UNESCO’s establishment in the early 1940s. During the CAME negotiations, the question of whether the new organisation was to be governmental or non-governmental was of great contention. In particular the French delegates to the CAME conference advocated for the creation of a non-governmental organisation, which would perpetuate the model and work of the IICI and the ICIC. Their draft for the new organisation attributed a strong role to individual non-governmental experts, who would be able to continue the educational, scientific and cultural work of UNESCO’s predecessors and protect these issues from political power and ideological considerations.<sup>69</sup> The French vision was, however, opposed by other governments involved, in particular the United States and the United Kingdom, which advocated for a stronger intergovernmental model. According to them, an organisation run by individuals and non-governmental communities would never achieve sufficient political standing and therefore “never get beyond the stage of philosophising and wishful thinking, of which one had already seen too much in the interwar period”.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Haas, “Introduction”, 16.

<sup>68</sup> Hoggart, “UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir”, 101; Claudia Kalinka, “Die Einbeziehung der Nichtregierungsorganisationen in die Arbeit der UNESCO”, ed. Sabine von Schorlemer, *Beiträge des UNESCO-Lehrstuhls für Internationale Beziehungen* 8 (2013): 1, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:14-qucosa-129327> (last accessed 5 August 2015). However, Martens remarks that many studies on NGOs at the UN mention a particularly close relationship between UNESCO and NGOs but do not provide an in-depth analysis or other empirical justifications for this claim. See Kerstin Martens, “The Role of NGOs in the UNESCO System”, *Transnational Associations* 2 (1999): 68–82.

<sup>69</sup> Aant Elzinga, “UNESCO and the Politics of International Cooperation in the Realm of Science”, in *Les Sciences hors d’Occident au 20eme siècle*, ed. R. Waast and P. Petitjean (Paris: Orstom, 1996), 169; Martens, “The Role of NGOs in the UNESCO System.”

<sup>70</sup> Elzinga, “UNESCO and the Politics of International Cooperation in the Realm of Science”, 169.

In the end, UNESCO was established as an intergovernmental organisation, but some concessions were made with regard to the role of non-governmental experts. First of all, as already discussed, the members of the Executive Board were initially individual personalities selected for their competence and intellectual achievements. Secondly, at the time of UNESCO's inception, member states agreed to create National Commissions for UNESCO, located in the member states, which frequently bring together individuals from government agencies, NGOs and civil society and consult with their governments in matters related to UNESCO and the organisation's fields of mandate.<sup>71</sup> And lastly, the constitution of UNESCO foresees the "consultation and cooperation with non-governmental international organizations concerned with matters within its competence".<sup>72</sup> For this purpose, UNESCO can also subsidise NGOs and even create new ones — a feature which distinguishes UNESCO's relationship with NGOs from other UN agencies.

### **UNESCO's cooperation with civil society and NGOs**

While the individual experts in the Executive Board were soon replaced by governmental officials, thus diminishing the direct influence of professionals and civil society on UNESCO's governing bodies, UNESCO's official cooperation with National Commissions and NGOs had grown over the years.

Indeed, as the only organisation in the UN system to provide for the creation of National Commissions, over the past 70 years, UNESCO has been able to develop a large network of more than 190 commissions, which UNESCO itself calls "the Organization's essential link to civil society".<sup>73</sup> While National Commissions were originally only entrusted with "consultation and liaison", their official responsibilities later evolved. Thus, a Charter of National Commissions for UNESCO, adopted in 1978, added responsibilities for the preparation and evaluation of UNESCO's programmes. However, the actual support and advantage that a National Commission represents for UNESCO depends heavily on its size and importance, and on the relationship between the commission and its government or the national intellectual and professional communities. At the time of UNESCO's inception, National Commissions were supposed to be "the crown, the living expression

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<sup>71</sup> Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 8f.

<sup>72</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

<sup>73</sup> UNESCO, *Legal Texts on National Commissions for UNESCO*, ERC-2002/WS/1 (Paris: UNESCO, 2002). As of May 2015, UNESCO counts 199 National Commissions around the world, including some countries with several separate commissions, representing, for instance, different language communities within the country.

in each country, of UNESCO's commitment to free intellectual life".<sup>74</sup> Yet, reality showed that this freedom is often limited or denied by governments in charge of appointing the commission members, who therefore appear to be less open to the critical input or programme evaluations by non-governmental organisations.<sup>75</sup> As a consequence, rather than an entire commission, it is often one or several particularly active individuals of National Commissions who contribute to UNESCO's agenda-setting and decision-making, as was the case for UNESCO's development of a policy discourse on the information society. These individual members are frequently part of a particular strong epistemic community, together with other professional or academic experts of their field as well as some UNESCO staff members.<sup>76</sup>

Aside from National Commissions, UNESCO's relations with NGOs have increased during the 70 years of existence, both on paper and on the operational level. In 1960, to keep abreast with the growing number of associated NGOs, UNESCO complemented its constitution's very short provisions regarding NGOs by adopting supplementary directives which further institutionalised the relations with non-governmental actors. Amended in 1966, these directives defined the conditions that NGOs are required to fulfil to be eligible for admission to the different categories of relations with UNESCO, and specified the concrete mechanisms for co-operation.<sup>77</sup> In 1995, and thus during the period under scrutiny in this thesis, the classification of NGOs at UNESCO was entirely reorganised. The result of the reorganisation is of importance for a better understanding of UNESCO's development of a policy discourse on the information society as it explains the particular influence of certain professional groups and epistemic communities thanks to their privileged status at UNESCO.<sup>78</sup>

After the revisions of 1995 (and until further amendments in 2011), NGOs were eligible for three different types of relations with UNESCO: formal relations, further divided into

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<sup>74</sup> Hoggart, "UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir", 99.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>76</sup> There is surprisingly little research about UNESCO's relationship with its National Commissions and about their influence on UNESCO's policy-making. For some descriptive details, see Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 83ff; Hoggart, "UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir", 99ff; Hüfner and Reuther, *UNESCO-Handbuch*, 30ff.

<sup>77</sup> UNESCO, "Directives concerning UNESCO's relations with international non-governmental organizations", no document code, 1960 (UNESDOC). Hoggart, "UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir", 101.

<sup>78</sup> The analysis of the influence of professional and epistemic communities is contained in the empirical Part III of this thesis.

associate relations or consultative relations, and operational relations.<sup>79</sup> NGOs that hold formal relations with UNESCO were invited to send observers to the General Conferences and the meetings of the programme commissions and allowed to make statements on matters within their competence. In addition, they were able to submit written statements to the Director-General on programme matters and entitled to receive all necessary documentation from UNESCO.<sup>80</sup> In particular, NGOs that hold associate relations were very closely integrated in the various stages of planning and execution of UNESCO's activities and could, therefore, have a real impact on the programme planning of the organisation, if the political and organisational situation allowed for it. This provision for an institutionalised integration of non-governmental experts and professionals into the policy-making process is a feature which makes UNESCO's relationship with civil society quite unique in the UN system.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the closely integrated NGOs, the 1995 directives allowed for a large number of organisations to hold more flexible and dynamic operational relations with UNESCO. They were only invited to meetings if a significant contribution was expected, and could otherwise take part in collective consultation processes organised by UNESCO. By introducing this loose connection, UNESCO tried to encourage the work of these NGOs —many of them from developing countries and often operating only on the regional or national level— without integrating them too closely.<sup>82</sup>

The various revisions contributed to organising UNESCO's relation with the almost 600 NGOs more efficiently by reducing the number of formally associated organisations by one third. In her extensive study about UNESCO's relationship with NGOs, Kerstin Martens remarked that as a result of the 1995 regulations, almost all NGOs that remained in the highest and most privileged category of relations were organisations created by UNESCO itself.<sup>83</sup> This ability to set up new organisations is another particular feature of

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<sup>79</sup> In 2011, another revision of the directives led to the reduction of these different categories to only two. Since this revision concerns a period outside the scope of this thesis, it is not further discussed here, see UNESCO, "New directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with non-governmental organizations", 36 C/48, 18 August 2011 (UNESDOC). For more details, see also Kalinka, "Die Einbeziehung der Nichtregierungsorganisationen in die Arbeit der UNESCO", 4ff.

<sup>80</sup> UNESCO, "Revision of the directives concerning UNESCO's relations with international non-governmental organizations", 28 C/43, 28 August 1995 (UNESDOC). Unlike in the UN, in UNESCO the status of an NGO is based on the degree of cooperation offered by the NGO and not on the range of its activities. Hoggart, "UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir", 102.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>82</sup> Martens, "The Role of NGOs in the UNESCO System".

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

UNESCO, which makes its relationship with non-governmental actors special within the UN system.

Indeed, since its inception, UNESCO has regularly contributed to the establishment of NGOs under its auspices in order to assign them specific tasks or entire areas of responsibility.<sup>84</sup> As a result, many important umbrella organisations and large associations own their origins to UNESCO, such as the International Council of Archives (ICA), the International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Furthermore, UNESCO has always been able to grant direct financial subventions to existing NGOs or to support them indirectly via office accommodation at the UNESCO Headquarters, travel grants, research, the organisation and hosting of meetings or other administrative backing. In peak times, the total budget granted for the support of and contracts with NGOs reached almost \$5 million.<sup>85</sup>

But since the financial crisis triggered by the withdrawal of the United States and the United Kingdom in the mid-1980s, direct subventions can only be granted to new NGOs, preferably from developing countries, for a limited period of time. On the one hand, this prevents some NGOs from growing too dependent on UNESCO and its financial support; on the other hand, it contributes to the diversification of civil society organisations on the global scale. Moreover, the new rule was a measure to control the allocation of grants by the different programme sectors of the Secretariat, which often attributed funds to the organisations that appeared most useful for their purposes, thereby funding and promoting their own epistemic communities.

In conclusion, UNESCO has a long and very strong relationship with non-governmental actors. As well as being directly elected members of UNESCO's governing bodies during the first years of the organisation, they have been able to contribute to UNESCO's programme activities and planning either via UNESCO's network of National Commissions or through its institutionalised relations with a large number of NGOs, including many professional associations and umbrella expert organisations. However, with UNESCO remaining an intergovernmental organisation in which governmental representatives hold the decision-making power, the influence of non-governmental experts and professionals is frequently challenged by either UNESCO's member states community or single governments. Despite the various restrictions and amendments made to UNESCO's directives with regard to non-governmental organisations, many members of the Secretariat continue to rely on the support of the professional

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<sup>84</sup> For an historical account on the creation of NGOs during UNESCO's early years, see Hoggart, "UNESCO and NGOs: A Memoir", 103ff.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

communities which they often come from themselves, and continue to draw on their epistemic communities for the planning and operationalisation of UNESCO's daily work.

## Chapter conclusion

It is difficult to summarise UNESCO's mission, functions, set up and its particular relationship with experts and civil society, without omitting important elements that could equally contribute to better understanding the organisation's policy discourse. And despite UNESCO's ambitious humanistic mission and its exemplary institutionalised collaboration with non-governmental actors, it is equally difficult to omit the criticism that the organisation has been exposed to since its inception. Be it the slowness of UNESCO's agenda-setting, the inefficiency of its complex bureaucracy, the stolidness of its hierarchy, the elite character of its programmes, the top-down approach of its normative instruments, its incapacity to include all relevant actors, and the negligence of member states to implement its decision — the points for which UNESCO has been criticised are too manifold to be summed up here.<sup>86</sup> For this reason, this introductory chapter focused on outlining the historical and structural conditions that are important for UNESCO's development of a policy discourse on the information society. In particular, it aimed to show why and where UNESCO's policy-making processes are exceptionally open to intellectual debates and the discursive power of new ideas introduced and promoted by epistemic communities. On the one hand, this openness is due to the fact that, at all levels of its organisational structure, UNESCO provides for consultation and input by the professional communities related to the organisation's fields of mandate. On the other hand, this openness is necessary since these fields of mandate are more diverse and vast than is the case for most other UN organisations. Consequently, UNESCO needs the expertise provided by professional and academic experts in order to plan and carry out its programmes without losing its credibility as a specialised agency of the United Nations system.

The following figure illustrates UNESCO's organisational structure and its cooperation with non-governmental actors at the various levels:

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<sup>86</sup> For more elaborated summaries of the criticism of UNESCO, see for instance Békri, *L'Unesco: une entreprise erronée ?*; Maurel, *Histoire de l'Unesco*; Singh, "Issue Structures and Deliberative Contexts: Is the WTO More Participatory than UNESCO?"

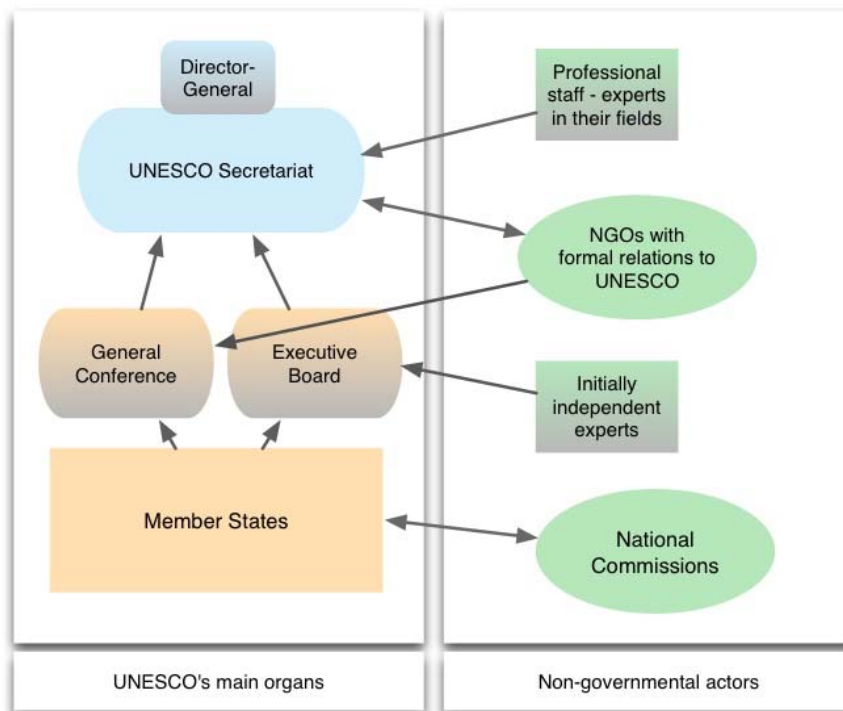


Figure 2: UNESCO's organisational structure and cooperation with non-governmental actors

UNESCO's openness to intellectual debates about ideas, values and norms also has its downsides. It makes UNESCO much more susceptible to ideological conflicts and the politicisation of debates, thereby steering the attention away from the organisation's operational activities or other apolitical activities. This tendency towards politicisation, which is an inherent part of UNESCO's constitutional set up and mandate, was additionally increased by a trend towards more governmental control in its governing bodies. As a result, content-related, professional and philosophical debates often gave way to interest-driven confrontation during and between UNESCO's General Conference sessions. This led some commentators to draw pessimistic conclusions about UNESCO's pursuit of the free flow of ideas and intercultural understanding, which they saw progressively replaced by power struggles and conflict of interests:

“Or, un esprit qui n'est pas indépendant n'est plus un esprit du tout. Une pensée qui n'est pas une pensée libre n'est plus une pensée. C'est un intérêt qui s'exprime, c'est donc un ventre, ou un porte-monnaie. À l'UNESCO, on ne pense plus guère : on gère plutôt des conflits d'intérêts et des rapports de pouvoir. Tout est politique, et tout est politisé.”<sup>87</sup>

This tendency towards increasingly politicised debates is first and foremost visible in UNESCO's activities with regard to communication and information, its fifth field of

<sup>87</sup> Citot, “L'UNESCO”.



competence, the last to be added, which has always been the most contested one. The following chapter retraces the history of these activities from 1945 to 1989 in order to introduce the issues, actors and politicised debates that eventually impacted UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society during the 1990s.

## **2. Historical background: The origins of UNESCO's engagement in the field of media, information and digital technology (1946-1989)**

For a thorough understanding of UNESCO's position regarding the information society, it is necessary to start from a historical review of the guiding principles and the most important activities in the field of information and communication since the organisation's inception. This chapter therefore focuses on UNESCO's activities prior to the period under scrutiny in this thesis and aims to provide the necessary historical background for understanding UNESCO's later reflections on questions of digital technology and new media.<sup>88</sup>

The history presented in this chapter is based on the observation that, for the first fifty years of UNESCO's existence, the organisation's activities in the field of information, communication and media were executed in separate settings:

- First of all, all projects and programmes dealing with media and the free flow of news and information products were carried out within the Department of Mass Communication. This department existed since the organisation's early years, since media and communication were amongst UNESCO's first fields of activities.
- In 1967, the department in charge of media and mass communication became part of the newly founded Sector for Communication, which also included the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives, in charge of UNESCO's programmes dealing with information services and data used for scientific and technical purposes. But even within this joint sector, the two departments remained distinct and continued to carry out separate projects.
- In addition, all projects dealing with information technology, data processing and digital computing were located within the Sector for Science. They were integrated into the common Sector for Communication in 1990, but were not combined with

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<sup>88</sup> Although archival records have been consulted for this chapter, this historical introduction does not yet present any primary research results and therefore remains mainly descriptive.

the programmes and projects on media and information until the mid-1990s when UNESCO eventually responded to the convergence of information, communication and digital technology by creating new institutional structures and programmes.

Consequently, in this chapter, UNESCO's activities in the field of communication, information and informatics are analysed as three distinct realms, each of them with a different historical development:



*Figure 3: Three realms of UNESCO programmes dealing with information*

The chapter introduces the three separate realms, their history and their importance for this research. It thereby shows how the three realms—the political struggle around media and communication, the activities related to information management and the focus on the growing impact of computer technology on society and development—can be seen as three parallel, though interrelated threads that led up to the period in which UNESCO had to develop a convincing policy discourse on the information society.

In addition, the chapter introduces the three professional communities that played a significant role for UNESCO's programme, namely journalists and communication scholars for the field of media and mass communication; information technicians and computer specialists for the activities related to informatics and its social impact; and lastly, information professionals such as librarians, archivists and documentation specialists who contributed to the programmes dealing with information management and policies.

## 2.1 Communication and mass media: The Free Flow of Information versus a New World Information and Communication Order

The origins of UNESCO's interest in the field of media and communication can be traced back as far as 1945, when the first conference for UNESCO's establishment accepted a proposal by the United States to add the field of mass communication to the new organisation's responsibilities.<sup>89</sup> In the aftermath of the Second World War, for many participating governments who were tired of mass media being abused for nationalistic propaganda purposes, the internationalisation of communication and information flows held the promise of exchanging and diffusing knowledge across national borders. In the humanistic spirit of the new organisation, a cross-border exchange of information was seen as an appropriate means of promoting mutual understanding between countries and, by doing so, of countervailing nationalistic thinking. In this sense, the exchange of ideas and information was not to remain limited to political and intellectual elites but, rather, was to reach all people through the use and exchange of mass communication and electronic media, as UNESCO's first Director-General, Julian Huxley, recorded some years later:

“It was also pointed out that if UNESCO were to exert a more powerful and more extended influence than its forerunner, the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, and become an organization of peoples instead of one only of Governments and intellectuals, it must also concern itself with the methods which alone can ensure the wholesale spread of information and culture and exert a mass influence on opinion — modern printing, wireless and cinema; and the whole field of Mass Communications was accordingly added to its territory”.<sup>90</sup>

As a consequence, as well as being included in UNESCO's mandate, upon a US proposal, communication was also attributed the same emphasis as UNESCO's other fields of activity, namely education, science and culture. With this move, the US delegation to UNESCO gained its first victory over other governments that had warned against the risks this additional priority could bring for the organisation and the international community. None of them, however, expected communication and mass media to become, only a few decades later, —as the American historian William Preston aptly

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<sup>89</sup> Resolution “Media of Mass Communication”, E.C.O./Conf./13, adopted on 15 November 1945, in UNESCO, “Conference for the Establishment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation”, ECO/CONF./29, 1-16 November 1945 (UNESDOC).

<sup>90</sup> UNESCO, “Report of the Director-General on the Activities of the Organisation in 1947”, 2 C/4, November-December 1947, 17 (UNESDOC).

described— “Pandora’s box of politics in the history of the United States relationship with UNESCO”.<sup>91</sup>

### The Free Flow of Information

The question of mass media has been one of the most widely discussed and most politicised issues within UNESCO from its inception. While the United States’ government and main US press agencies initially propagated the “freedom of information” and “free flow of ideas” with enormous success on a national and international level, communist countries like the Soviet Union viewed the United States’ insistence to extend UNESCO’s mandate to media and information as a Western political propaganda move.<sup>92</sup> The concept of the “free flow of information” in particular, which, to date, has served as one of the leading principles for the organisation’s work, was criticised by several member states of UNESCO and by critical Western scholars as a pure means for cultural domination.<sup>93</sup>

This reproach was not entirely without justification as the motivations of the United States for extending UNESCO’s mandate to media and communication were of a clearly economic and geopolitical nature rather than a purely humanistic ideal. As the Finnish media scholar Kaarle Nordenstreng claimed, the Free Flow principle “has never been a neutral and ecumenical concept but rather a tactical argument in socioeconomic and ideological struggles”.<sup>94</sup> In the last years of the Second World War already, when it had become apparent that the United States was to emerge as the most important world power, the US government established the principle of the “free flow of information” — the idea that no national borders should restrict the flow of information and media goods between nations— as one of their main priorities for the post-war period. In a world in which existing orders had been devastated during the war and continued to shift due to growing decolonisation movements, the USA saw the domination of the information

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<sup>91</sup> Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*, 37.

<sup>92</sup> This reproach is considered as one of the reasons why Poland and Czechoslovakia withdrew from the organisation in 1947, and the USSR only joined in 1954, see Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 15; 110ff.

<sup>93</sup> Herbert Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (White Plains, N.Y: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976). Since this realm of UNESCO’s activities was mostly analysed and criticised by US-critical, often politically left-leaning scholars, this sub-chapter draws primarily on their work. Although there are very few sources that defend the US perspective on these issues, they are mentioned when appropriate, for the sake of completeness and balance.

<sup>94</sup> Kaarle Nordenstreng, “Deconstructing Libertarian Myths about Press Freedom”, in *Freedom of Expression: Citizenship and Journalism in the Digital Era*, ed. Ulla Carlsson (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2013), 51.

sector as a key factor for economic and cultural expansion and a way to promote Western values and the “American Way of Life” on a global scale.<sup>95</sup> In addition, it was considered an effective means of containing the spread of communist ideas throughout the world.<sup>96</sup>

Although the US government did not attempt to hide the economic interests behind the “free flow of information” and the “freedom of information” principles, the United Nations agencies were very receptive towards these ideas, albeit for more idealistic reasons.<sup>97</sup> In 1946, as well as inscribing the two principles into its constitution, UNESCO also created a section on Free Flow of Information in its Department of Mass Communication, under the supervision of an American staff member. In addition, the UN General Assembly established a Sub-commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, as part of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and adopted a resolution that declared freedom of information as a fundamental human right and touchstone of all other freedoms protected by the United Nations.<sup>98</sup>

Two years later, in 1948, a United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information led to a further polarisation of the divergent positions on the issue: The communist countries represented at the meeting complained that the Free Flow paradigm restricted their national sovereignty and could therefore not conform to the basic principles of international cooperation. In their opinion, the control of mass media and their content needed to remain in the hands of national governments and could not be regulated by intergovernmental agreements or international bodies. But the US delegation, supported by its Western allies, succeeded in dismissing all these objections as communist attempts to dismantle freedom of expression and information for purely ideological reasons. As a

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<sup>95</sup> Ulla Carlsson, “The Rise and Fall of NWICO. From a Vision of International Regulation to a Reality of Multilevel Governance”, *Nordicom Review* 24, no. 2 (2003): 34. For a detailed analysis of the “free flow of information” paradigm in the United States and its role for the cultural and economic domination, see Herbert Schiller, “Genesis of the Free Flow of Information Principles: The Imposition of Communications Dominations”, *Instant Research on Peace and Violence* 5, no. 2 (1975): 75-86; Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*. For its introduction and role in the UN, see Wells, *The UN, UNESCO and the Politics of Knowledge*, 69ff.

<sup>96</sup> Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*, 21.

<sup>97</sup> As an example for the public ostentation of US interests, the media scholar Herbert Schiller quotes the Assistant Secretary of State, William Benton, who represented the USA during UNESCO’s early general conferences and stated in 1946 that “the State Department [...] plans to do everything within its power along political or diplomatic lines to help break down the artificial barriers to the expansion of private American news agencies, magazines, motion pictures, and other media of communications throughout the world... Freedom of the press —and freedom of exchange [*sic*] of information generally— is an integral part of our foreign policy”, *Department of State Bulletin* 14, no. 344 (3 February 1946), 160, as cited by Schiller, “Genesis of the Free Flow of Information Principles: The Imposition of Communications Dominations”, 77).

<sup>98</sup> Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, 36; Christian Breunig, *Kommunikationspolitik der UNESCO* (Konstanz: Universitätsverlag Konstanz, 1987), 58.

result, the conference's final document drew mainly on the United States' interpretation of a free flow of information without taking other opinions into account. Accordingly, it was refused by all participating communist countries, which either dissented or abstained from the vote.<sup>99</sup>

Yet, as well as communist governments, some Western European governments and several developing countries looked upon the United States' advancement of the free flow paradigm with increasing ambivalent feelings. US commercial interests were too apparent, and were perceived, in particular by Great Britain and France, as a threat to their own national communication and information sectors.<sup>100</sup> An article published in the British newspaper *The Economist* reported from the 1948 conference that

“it was the impression of most delegations that the American wanted to secure for their news agencies that general freedom of the market for the most efficient which has been the object of all their initiatives in commercial policy — that they regard freedom of information as an extension of the charter of the International Trade Organisation rather than as a special and important subject on its own.”<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, the Western countries' discontent with the US strategy did not override their resentments against the Communist block and its attempts to reduce freedom of expression and the media. They therefore continued to support the United States' “Marshall Plan of Ideas” —as the US assistant secretary of state William Benton called it in 1950<sup>102</sup>— and contributed to the adoption of two legal agreements that endorsed the free flow principle: In 1948, the first instrument ever adopted by UNESCO, the Agreement For Facilitating the International Circulation of Visual and Auditory Materials of an Educational, Scientific and Cultural character demanded that customs duties and import licences for the mentioned goods be abolished. In 1950, this was followed by an Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials, which extended these rules to books, publication, works of art and all similar cultural products.<sup>103</sup> Both agreements stemmed from US initiatives, but expressed the idealistic

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<sup>99</sup> Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, 37. See also Elzinga, “UNESCO and the Politics of International Cooperation in the Realm of Science”, 172.

<sup>100</sup> Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 111.

<sup>101</sup> *The Economist* (1 May 1948): 701, as cited by Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, 38. For more examples of Western criticism see also Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*, 42ff.

<sup>102</sup> With the ‘Marshall Plan of Ideas’ Benton referred to the intensified efforts of the United States to encounter the “communist threat” through means as educational exchanges, international broadcasting, film programs etc. See Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*, 60; Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 39.

<sup>103</sup> Breunig, *Kommunikationspolitik der UNESCO*, 60.

ideas UNESCO was founded on and were, as such, positively received by a large number of member states, but wildly opposed by the Soviets and their allies.

In light of the confrontations between its member states, one of UNESCO's main ambitions during the first years was to draw the attention away from politicised debates and to dedicate its efforts to more operational questions regarding communication and media. This shift was particularly pushed by Julian Behrstock, the American director of UNESCO's Division of Free flow of Information, who emphasised the need to focus on more technical activities in the freedom of information field.<sup>104</sup> As a result, UNESCO started to implement a number of "Technical Assistance projects", which supported the development of information enterprises and national communication infrastructures in technically underdeveloped countries and contributed to improving facilities for professional training. While the emphasis was initially placed on supporting war-devastated countries in Europe, UNESCO's focus later shifted to developing countries that had never, until then, benefitted from a developed media or even social, political or economic system.<sup>105</sup>

The logic behind this shift to more operational Technical Assistance projects was simple: in contrast to media content, technology was broadly considered neutral and value free and its transfer was therefore promoted as an apolitical activity. Yet, critical voices soon arose that accused the Technical Assistance of being just another means of economic and cultural domination since they allowed industrialised countries to introduce their technical products in developing countries and, by doing so, to create new dependencies and adaptations.<sup>106</sup> Or as Preston described it: "Just as communications aroused fears of 'cultural imperialism', so technical transfers stimulated cries of 'development imperialism'."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Julian Behrstock's history with UNESCO is a very interesting one as he belonged to a group of eight American staff members whom, in the mid-1950s, the US government requested UNESCO's Director-General to dismiss because it doubted their anti-communist beliefs and loyalty to the United States. In contrast to his colleagues, Behrstock's investigation was dropped and he continued to serve at UNESCO until his retirement in 1976. He later described these troubled times in his autobiography, see Behrstock, *The Eighth Case*.

<sup>105</sup> UNESCO's Commission on Technical Needs started its work in 1947 and considered at first ten European countries and two in Asia. It later extended its work to another seventeen areas. By its conclusion in 1951, it covered 87 countries and territories. For a detailed description of UNESCO's technical assistance in the field of media, see Breunig, *Kommunikationspolitik der UNESCO*, 134ff.

<sup>106</sup> Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination*, 46ff.

<sup>107</sup> Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*, 71.

## Towards a New World Information and Communication Order

The change in perception first started to show when, in the 1970s, in the middle of the Cold War confrontation, many developing countries that had recently gained independence began to voice claims for more political, economic and cultural sovereignty from the industrialised countries. This rising power of newly independent, poorer countries and their representation through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) created a third force that added a new North-South dimension to the East-West polarisation of the Cold War.<sup>108</sup> In 1974, NAM's demands for more economic sovereignty led to the adoption of the United Nations' Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which was considered as a "frontal ideological challenge to the *status quo*, that was generally termed 'liberal'".<sup>109</sup> Indeed, based on principles such as equality and common interests, the claims for a new economic order included fair terms of trade, economic assistance and self-determined access to Western technology. In line with these demands, in 1976, a NAM symposium also uttered the need of more informational sovereignty and voiced criticism on the cultural domination carried out under the free flow paradigm:<sup>110</sup>

"Since information in the world shows a disequilibrium favouring some and ignoring others, it is the duty of the non-aligned countries and the other developing countries to change this situation and obtain the decolonization of information and initiate a new international order in information".<sup>111</sup>

During the conference, the NAM countries acknowledged the important role of information and the media sector for their countries' development and identified several problems, including imbalances in international information and media flows — considered as 'one-way-flow' from the North to the South—, monopolisation of the press in the hands of the view transnational communication corporations and major press agencies, uneven distribution of satellite technology and, finally, unbalanced news coverage on third-world countries neglecting their populations' cultural identities. In addition, they criticised the unequal distribution of communication resources and

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<sup>108</sup> NAM's rise in power is commonly linked to the "OPEC Crisis", that is the fuel crisis of 1973, which led to a turbulent change of the global oil market and granted the non-aligned countries an important bargaining position vis-à-vis dominant powers as the United States. See Ulla Carlsson, "From NWICO to Global Governance of the Information Society", in *Media & Glocal Change. Rethinking Communication for Development*, ed. Oscar Hemer and Thomas Tufte (Buenos Aires: Nordicom, 2005), 197.

<sup>109</sup> Carlsson, "The Rise and Fall of NWICO. From a Vision of International Regulation to a Reality of Multilevel Governance", 39.

<sup>110</sup> Victor Pickard, "Neoliberal Visions and Revisions in Global Communications Policy From NWICO to WSIS", *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (1 April 2007): 118-39.

<sup>111</sup> Non-Aligned Symposium on Information in Tunis, Tunisia, March 1976, as cited by Kaarle Nordenstreng, *The Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1984), 10.



introduced the new concept of a Right to Communicate (r2c), thus adding the dimension of communication to the appeals regarding informational disequilibria.<sup>112</sup> As a consequence, the initial call for a ‘New *Information Order*’ grew into a large movement for a ‘New World *Communication and Information Order*’.<sup>113</sup>

Three main elements render the debates around NWICO fundamental for understanding UNESCO’s later position on the information society and on the role of information in the digital age: first of all, the politicisation of the debate through US observers and lobbyists of the Western libertarian media system as well as their opponents, which caused a separation of the political dimension of NWICO from its factual basis; secondly, the shift of attention towards development concerns that UNESCO undertook to overcome the political controversy; and, lastly, the trauma that the NWICO debate and the reaction of the United States and other Western member states represented for the organisation and whose impact is still visible until today.

The political struggle about NWICO reached a global scale in 1974 when UNESCO, which had been chosen by the NAM as its primary forum for debates around issues of media imbalances, proposed a Mass Media Declaration that aimed at finding global solutions for the disagreements about freedom of information and the worldwide dominance of Western news and communication industry.<sup>114</sup> The developing countries’ proposal, that was seconded by UNESCO’s communist member states, encountered an

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<sup>112</sup> The concept of a (Human) Right to Communicate (r2c) is generally credited to the liberal French media Expert Jean D’Arcy and was taken up by UNESCO, which passed a resolution on the r2c at its General Conference in 1974 (UNESCO, “Communication Research and policies”, 18 C/Resolutions, Resolution 4.12 adopted on 20 November 1974 [UNESDOC]). Even though the concept was regularly discussed during the following years, it eventually disappeared from the UNESCO programmes in the early 1980s. Too strong had been the opposition by some Western states which associated the r2c with NWICO and feared that its endorsement could lead to normative consequences, as for instance an international code (Alan McKenna, “The Right to Communicate – A Continuing Victim of Historic Links to NWICO and UNESCO?”, in *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics – Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides*, ed. Divina Frau-Meigs et al. (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), 101. For a detailed analysis of the links between the Right to Communicate, NWICO and UNESCO, see Alan McKenna, *A Human Right to Participate in the Information Society* (New York: Hampton Press, 2011), 137ff.

<sup>113</sup> The NWICO process has been discussed in great detail and variety by a large number of scholars. The following sub-chapter therefore avoids another extensive account and only gives a short summary of the issue. For more detailed analyses of the debates around NWICO and UNESCO, see e.g. Breunig, *Kommunikationspolitik der UNESCO*; Carlsson, “The Rise and Fall of NWICO. From a Vision of International Regulation to a Reality of Multilevel Governance”; Divina Frau-Meigs et al., eds., *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics – Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012); Cees Hamelink, “MacBride with Hindsight”, in *Beyond Cultural Imperialism: Globalization, Communication & the New International Order*, ed. Peter Golding and Phil Harris (London: Sage, 1997), 69-93.

<sup>114</sup> For a detailed analysis of the declaration and its political context see Nordenstreng, *The Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO*.

insurmountable opposition by Western industrialised countries, most prominently the United States, which accused UNESCO of “infringing on press freedom by calling for governmental controls of news content, a prevailing myth still in circulation to this day”.<sup>115</sup> As a consequence, the “UNESCO Declaration on Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthen Peace and International Understanding to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and the Incitement of War” was only adopted in 1978, after four years of fervid negotiations. In the meantime, both the Mass Media Declaration and the entire NWICO movement encountered what has been described as the “Western counter-attack”<sup>116</sup>, consisting in fierce criticism on governmental level and in a campaign by Western public and commercial media. In 1976, 33 media organisations, two-thirds of them from the United States, founded the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) to represent media interests and to lobby against governmental press control and for the free flow of information. Besides media organisations from the US, the WPFC also included some organisations from Latin America, Europe and Asia and representatives from all levels of media, such as broadcasters, publishers, editors and journalists. Through its members, in particular the American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA), which belonged to the US National Commission for UNESCO, the committee also had primary influence on US media policies.<sup>117</sup> Thanks to these close relations with the United States and other Western governments, and through a series of international conferences, the WPFC tried “to act as a watchdog for Western media interests” and to eliminate all references to NWICO from UNESCO’s communication policies.<sup>118</sup> As a result, the debate around the New World Information and Communication became increasingly politicised and conflictual.

### **A turn towards media development**

In response to the political confrontation between its member states, in 1976, UNESCO appointed a group of experts to study the factual basis of the claims behind the NWICO movement. This International Commission for the Study of Communication —or

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<sup>115</sup> Pickard, “Neoliberal Visions and Revisions in Global Communications Policy From NWICO to WSIS”, 123.

<sup>116</sup> Robin Mansell and Kaarle Nordenstreng, “Great Media and Communication Debates: WSIS and the MacBride Report”, *Information Technologies & International Development* 3, no. 4 (2006): 15-36.

<sup>117</sup> For more details about the WPFC and its role within UNESCO and the NWICO debate, see C. Anthony Giffard, *Unesco and the Media* (New York; London: Longman, 1989), 27ff.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

MacBride commission as it is usually called— was mandated to “analyse communication problems, in their different aspects, within the perspective of the establishment of a new international economic order and of the measures to be taken to foster the institution of a ‘new world information order’”.<sup>119</sup> Under the leadership of the Irish diplomat and Nobel Prize winner Sean MacBride, the commission’s 16 members —representing different ideological, political, economic, cultural and geographical backgrounds— prepared a final report that eventually confirmed the persistence of inequalities in the field of communication.<sup>120</sup> Although the commission's expert studies and the final report touched upon all forms of communication, the main focus remained on mass media. But in contrast to the global perspective of the NAM proposals, the recommendations included in the report focused much more on the national level. In addition, the report endorsed a strong development-oriented perspective as it saw the major role for change on the side of the developing countries themselves and reduced the role of the industrialised countries to that of donors providing financial support to the developing world.<sup>121</sup> That way, the MacBride commission chose a conciliatory approach that aimed to appease the politicisation of the debate and to lead it back to a discussion about practical solutions.

In parallel to the preparation of the MacBride report, UNESCO started to work on these practical means, with the outspoken ambition of replacing the ideological debates with technical and financial co-operation. In 1978, the United States put forward a proposal to create an autonomous clearinghouse of media development assistance that would help to enhance the communication capacities and infrastructures of the developing world and, thereby, to redress the communication imbalances without restricting the media activities of the industrialised countries. With the clear goal of diluting UNESCO’s dominance, the US proposal suggested that the clearinghouse be administered by several UN agencies, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and that it be funded through bilateral projects supported by industry and private sources.<sup>122</sup> An alternative proposal was put forward by moderate developing countries, represented by the Tunisian member of the MacBride commission, Mustapha Masmoudi. He suggested a similar programme that would, however, take the form of an intergovernmental fund under the auspices of UNESCO and its Director-General. A compromise was eventually found during the

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<sup>119</sup> UNESCO, “Approved Programme and budget for 1977-1978”, 19 C/5 Approved, February 1976, § 4155 (UNESDOC).

<sup>120</sup> The MacBride report with the official title “Many Voices, One World. Communication and Society, Today and Tomorrow” was presented during UNESCO’s 21<sup>st</sup> General Conference in Belgrade, in 1980.

<sup>121</sup> Carlsson, “From NWICO to Global Governance of the Information Society”, 199.

<sup>122</sup> William G. Harley, “The U.S. Stake in the IPDC”, *Journal of Communication* 31, no. 4 (1981): 157.

Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development (DEVCOM), which took place in Paris in 1980 and was attended by over 500 participants from 24 member states.<sup>123</sup> The compromise solution consisted in the creation of the Intergovernmental Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) in the form of an international fund with an independent administration elected by UNESCO's General Conference.<sup>124</sup>

Similar to the media assistance carried out under the Technical Assistance projects between the 1940s and '60s, the US proposal for IPDC was to overcome imbalances through material and operational support. Having been described as a tactical shift "from stick to carrot"<sup>125</sup>, IPDC can also be interpreted as a message to the developing countries since it held out the promise of Western economic and material support in exchange for a moderation of the ideological rhetoric about NWICO.<sup>126</sup>

Yet, while the developing countries seemed initially receptive to this solution, the deeper misunderstandings about the nature and objectives of media regulation and information freedom reappeared very soon: From the beginning, the United States and the WPFC criticised the limited role the private media sector was to play in the new programme and accused IPDC of only supporting government-run media while ignoring private sector leadership in the media market.<sup>127</sup> For similar reasons, further controversies arose during the constitutional session in 1981, which concerned the modalities of decision-making and financing of the new programme. As a result, the United States temporarily refused to contribute to IPDC's funding, despite the fact that it had initially proposed its creation. In the end, a funding system based on voluntary contributions was installed, which allowed donor countries to exercise a control function by selecting the concrete projects they wished to finance themselves.<sup>128</sup> This voluntary funding system, however, resulted in a budget for IPDC that remained far beyond the initial expectations and commitments. In addition, due to a number of bureaucratic and administrative problems, the initial

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<sup>123</sup> Breunig, *Kommunikationspolitik der UNESCO*, 146ff.

<sup>124</sup> Mansell and Nordenstreng, "Great Media and Communication Debates", 23.

<sup>125</sup> Nordenstreng, *The Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO*, 16.

<sup>126</sup> Achal Mehra, "International Program for the Development of Communication: The Trouble With Meteors Is That They Die Fast", *International Communication Gazette* 32, no. 1 (8 January 1983): 4; 12.

<sup>127</sup> For more details about the US position to IPDC from developing country perspective see Jaswant S. Yadava, *Politics of News: Third World Perspective* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1984), 45ff. For the US perspective see Harley, "The U.S. Stake in the IPDC".

<sup>128</sup> Richard C. Vincent, "The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the Context of the Information Super-Highway", in *Democratizing Communication? Comparative Perspectives on Information and Power*, ed. Mashoed Bailie and Dwayne Roy Winseck (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1997), 7ff.

enthusiasm for the new programme soon gave way to disinterest and frustrations by both industrialised and developing countries.<sup>129</sup>

Following the above development, it becomes clear that the publication of the MacBride report and the creation of IPDC did not succeed in overcoming the political tensions amongst UNESCO's member states.<sup>130</sup> On the contrary, in 1984, the United States carried out its frequently-uttered threat and withdrew from UNESCO.<sup>131</sup> Its departure was followed by that of the United Kingdom and Singapore, one year later, and thus caused a loss of about 30 percent of UNESCO's total budget.

According to the United States, the main motives for this move were UNESCO's reputed inheritance of communist ideas and opposition to a liberal economy as well as major administrative and bureaucratic problems due to the leadership of the then Senegalese Director-General Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow. In addition, the US government claimed that UNESCO had departed from the principles it was founded on as it no longer aimed to promote the free flow of ideas and the mutual understanding amongst people. However, these complaints were objected by some Western academics and intellectuals defending UNESCO. For them, UNESCO's engagement in the NWICO debate rather showed that the organisation was finally living up to its mandate by taking responsibility for the politicised questions of information. In the same spirit, they criticised the earlier Technical Assistance projects and the return to the practical projects of IPDC as an "abdication of responsibility".<sup>132</sup>

And in fact, most observers also agreed that the United States' withdrawal was not due primarily to the official reasons given but represented an overall strategic shift away from multilateralism and a warning about what would happen on a larger scale if US interests were not respected by the United Nations.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, it was provoked by a fervid

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<sup>129</sup> Judith A. Engstrom, "The International Programme for the Development of Communication: A Decade of Infancy", *International Communication Gazette* 50, no. 2-3 (1 October 1992): 169. An evaluation of IPDC by the Norwegian government in 2002 confirmed the problematic bureaucratic and administrative procedures and tried to relate them to the existence of controversial development paradigms in the administration and execution of the funded projects, see Kristin Skare Orgeret and Helge Ronning, *Media in Development: An Evaluation of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)* (Oslo: Norway – Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002).

<sup>130</sup> Dutt, *The Politicization of the United Nations Specialized Agencies*.

<sup>131</sup> For a detailed analysis and chronology of the US withdrawal, see Giffard, *Unesco and the Media*, 55ff.

<sup>132</sup> Preston, Herman, and Schiller, *Hope and Folly*, 123.

<sup>133</sup> Mansell and Nordenstreng, "Great Media and Communication Debates", 23. Nordenstreng quotes the former Assistant Secretary of the State of the Carter administration in calling UNESCO "the Grenada of the United Nations" thereby referring to the US invasion of that small island in 1983 that was often considered an unveiled warning to other communist countries (Kaarle Nordenstreng, "The History of NWICO and Its Lessons", in *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics – Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides*, ed. Divina Frau-Meigs et al.; Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012, 35). For the

campaign on the part of UNESCO's conservative opponents within the US, which lobbied against the organisation at governmental level and through a series of articles and letters to elite newspapers.<sup>134</sup> These opponents included the WPFC as well as some like-minded organisations, such as the Inter American Press Association (IAPA)<sup>135</sup>, the International Federation of Newspaper Editors (FIEJ)<sup>136</sup> and conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation.<sup>137</sup>

The departure of the United States and the subsequent loss of financial contributions to UNESCO's regular budget caused a crisis from which the organisation recovered only very slowly. In the following decades, the name of NWICO was banished from UNESCO's official documents and discussions.<sup>138</sup> Instead, the free flow paradigm was officially re-established as leading principle for the organisation's activities in the field of media and communication. UNESCO thereby tried to dissociate itself from the ideologically loaded debates around NWICO. However, as Nordenstreng recently pointed out, "UNESCO seems to have departed from its legitimate constitutional mandate by elevating freedom of information as a top priority with a self-serving objective". By supporting "the myth that its mission is unconditional free flow", UNESCO would not

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multiple other reasons for the US departure, see also Frau-Meigs, "Le retour des Etats-Unis à l'UNESCO", 866.

<sup>134</sup> Vincent, "The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the Context of the Information Super-Highway", 9.

<sup>135</sup> IAPA is a non-governmental press advocacy group, made up of media organisations from North and South America and the Caribbean. Established in 1942-43, it predominantly represented Latin American organisations until the creation of an US chapter in 1947. Interestingly, during the 1970s, the then-president of IAPA, James S. Copley, was criticised for cooperating closely with the CIA in order to fight the "Communist threat" in Latin and Central America, see, e.g. Carl Bernstein, "The CIA and the Media", *Rolling Stone* (20 October 1977), 65-67; Joe Trento and Dave Roman, "The Spies Who Came In From the Newsroom", *Penthouse* (August 1977), 45-47. IAPA's opposition against UNESCO's alleged support for Communist interests in the media is, therefore, hardly surprising.

<sup>136</sup> FIEJ was founded in 1948 by survivors of the clandestine press of Nazi-occupied European countries, mainly from France and the Netherlands. In 2009, it merged with some other organisations and became the World Association of Newspapers and New Publishers (WAN-IFRA) which considers itself a "trade association with a human rights mandate" in the service of the news publishing industry.

<sup>137</sup> The Heritage foundation is a US American conservative think tank based in Washington, founded in 1973 in order to defend "the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense". During Ronald Reagan's US presidency, the foundation took a leading role in proposing conservative policies, and has ever since been considered to be one of the most influential conservative research institutions. For more information on this opposition, see also Giffard, *Unesco and the Media*, 29; Arne Hintz, *Civil Society Media and Global Governance: Intervening Into the World Summit on the Information Society* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2009), 61.

<sup>138</sup> During the following decades, the NWICO ideas continued to be discussed outside of UNESCO, in alternative fora offered for example by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the Institute for Latin America (IPAL), and the Union for Democratic Communication (UDC), and the so-called MacBride Round Table, see Vincent, "The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the Context of the Information Super-Highway", 10.

be doing justice to its constitution that subordinated the promotion of the free flow of ideas to the higher goals of peace and security and the mutual knowledge and understanding of people.<sup>139</sup>

## 2.2 Information technology and informatics: From Digital Computing to Informatics for Development

Media and communication were not the only fields in which UNESCO was caught between the diverging positions of its member states. At the very same time when the organisation served as the international forum for discussions on NWICO, it was also involved in another, very different debate on disparities in the use and processing of information — a debate that concerned digital information technology, its influence on society and its unequal distribution on a global scale. In contrast to the confrontations about information flows, this issue received far less public and political attention and has consequently been less scrutinised by the scholarly work about UNESCO.<sup>140</sup> In addition, although UNESCO played a crucial role for both the debates on media and communication imbalances on the one hand, and those on digital information technology on the other hand, they took place in entirely separate settings.

Just like the NWICO controversy, UNESCO's early involvement in debates about digital technology is crucial for understanding its later position on the information society for three reasons: First, in contrast to the common belief that UNESCO joined international debates about the information society relatively late in comparison to other international bodies, its early activities in the field of informatics demonstrate that the organisation started to work on digital technology and its impact on society and development very early. Secondly, the retrospect shows that technology, in contrast to information flows and mass media, has been a much less controversial and politicised issue within the

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<sup>139</sup> Nordenstreng, "Deconstructing Libertarian Myths About Press Freedom", 49.

<sup>140</sup> To our knowledge, the French scholar Abdel Benchenna is the only researcher who focused on UNESCO's early history in the field of informatics, see Abdel Benchenna, "Réduire la fracture numérique Nord/Sud, une croyance récurrente des Organisations Internationales", *TIC & Développement* 1 (17 February 2005), <http://www.tic.ird.fr/spip99ff.html?article110> (last accessed 10 June 2013); Abdel Benchenna, "La création du programme international pour l'informatique. Contribution à l'histoire de la coopération internationale en matière d'informatique", *TIC & Développement* 4 (18 December 2008), <http://www.tic.ird.fr/spip4edc.html?article302> (last accessed 10 June 2013). From a less academic perspective, two personal accounts by UNESCO staff members involved in the first informatics programme were published by UNESCO in 2006: Sidney Passman, "The Way It Was: UNESCO and Informatics, a Memoir", in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005*, ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2006), 131-33; René Cluzel, "Making Everything Compute", in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005*, ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2006), 126-28.

international community; yet it still caused tensions between UNESCO and its partner organisation in charge of the initial programmes. And lastly, it proves that in its early reflections on the role of ICT, UNESCO had already developed a discourse that significantly differed from the common technological determinist viewpoint on technology as an ultimate motor of economic and social development.

In contrast to the previous and following subchapters, which mainly draw on secondary literature to retrace the origins of UNESCO's interest in questions of communication and information, this part is primarily based on first-hand consultations of archival material belonging to UNESCO and to the Intergovernmental Bureau of Informatics (IBI). Although the archives of IBI were transferred to UNESCO after the organisation's dissolution in 1988, the records were only recently retrieved and made available for public consultation. The sub-chapter consequently presents new findings and aims at fundamentally contributing to the historical research about UNESCO and its activities in the field of media, information and digital technology.<sup>141</sup>

### **An intergovernmental organisation for informatics**

As early as 1948, when informatics was still in its infancy and perceived as a purely scientific discipline, UNESCO reflected on the possibility of setting up an international institute for digital computing. At that time, computers were gigantic, room-sized machines, considered to be calculating tools for scientists. Given the mandate UNESCO had for the field of sciences, the organisation adopted a convention for the establishment of an international computation laboratory in 1951.<sup>142</sup> However, being ahead of its time

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<sup>141</sup> After IBI's dissolution, all its archives were transferred to UNESCO, where they were made only partially available to the public, due to time and financial constraints. Over the years, the existence of the remaining records (about 90 %) was forgotten. They were only rediscovered in 2010 by the chief archivist of UNESCO and the author of this thesis in a barred cellar room of UNESCO's Headquarters, and were since then made available for consultation in the UNESCO Archives. A more detailed account of UNESCO's and IBI's history in early debates about informatics has been published in Julia Pohle, "Going Digital: A Historical Perspective on Early International Cooperation in Informatics", in *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics – Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides*, ed. Divina Frau-Meigs et al. (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), 107-21. For a historical account of IBI from a political economy perspective, see Eileen Mahoney, "The Intergovernmental Bureau For Informatics: An International Organization within the Changing World of Political Economy", in *The Political Economy of Information*, ed. Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 297-315.

<sup>142</sup> UNESCO, "Convention for the Establishment of the International Computing Center", WS/0365.117/LA, 26-30 November 1951 (UNESDOC). The creation of a Computing laboratory was proposed for the first time by the French delegation to UNESCO's Preparatory Commission in May 1946 (UNESCO, "Committee of Experts on the Establishment of an International Computation Center",



with its interest in international co-operation in the field of digital computing, it was to take UNESCO ten years and many efforts to persuade a sufficient number of member states of the importance of the new centre. In contrast to research in other scientific disciplines, which was directly coordinated by the UNESCO Secretariat, the organisation had decided to entrust digital information processing to an external intergovernmental institution, to which member states had to accede and pay additional contributions in order to benefit from its services. Yet, the main industrialised countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, were already working on the development of their own national research centres for digital computing and could not see any advantage in the creation of a supplementary international institution. In addition, developing countries were either not yet aware of the possible advantages brought by digital technology or could not afford the additional contributions. After UNESCO tried to foster the interest in computer technology by hosting events like the first World Data Processing Congress in June 1959<sup>143</sup>, the International Computing Centre (ICC) was eventually established in 1961 and became operational in 1964.<sup>144</sup>

Although UNESCO played an important role by acting as depositary of the convention and permanent member of ICC's governing bodies, it showed little interest in the centre's concrete activities during the first decade. In addition, due to the very limited number of contributing member states and UNESCO's unwillingness to financially support the centre, ICC's initial budget was too restricted to effectively carry out its programme activities and thereby attract new members.<sup>145</sup> It was only after ICC underwent a profound restructuration in 1969–1974 that it received UNESCO's attention. As part of this reorganisation, the name of the organisation was changed to Intergovernmental Bureau for Informatics (IBI), a choice resulting from a long process of reflection on the ambitions of the centre: The term 'informatics', a combination of the two words 'information' and 'automatic', was coined in 1962 by the French scientist Philippe

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NS/ICC/8, 21 May 1951[UNESDOC]), but only came up again when the United Nations Economic and Social Council set up a committee to think about future UN Research Laboratories (UN ECOSOC, "United Nations Research Laboratories", E/1065, Resolution 160 VII adopted on 10 August 1948, [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/resdec1946\\_2000.asp](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/resdec1946_2000.asp) [last accessed 5 May 2013]).

<sup>143</sup> The congress resulted in the foundation of the International Federation of Information Processing (IFIP), an umbrella organisation for national societies working in the field of information processing which is one of UNESCO's closest partners in the field of information processing to date.

<sup>144</sup> This International Computing Center (ICC), established by UNESCO in 1961, is not to be confused with the United Nations International Computing Center (UN ICC), which was created in 1971 by agreement between the United Nations and its agencies as an inter-organisation facility to provide electronic data processing and later Internet hosting services.

<sup>145</sup> ICC, "Procès-verbal", 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, September/October 1964, 9 (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code).

Dreyfus (“*informatique*”). Even though the term is mostly translated into English as “computer science”, informatics as an academic discipline has a broader meaning and also includes the study of use of information technologies and the interaction of technology and humans. Following this definition of informatics as a discipline that studies both the technical parts of information processing and cognitive and social aspects of information technologies, IBI’s new objective became the promotion of computer technology and the understanding of its impact on society.<sup>146</sup>

IBI was, thus, amongst the first international institution to foster reflection on these issues at a time when the societal aspects of technical questions were hardly considered within international policy debates. Nevertheless, the organisation’s discourse was characterised by a profound technological determinism: Its vision of informatics was based on the belief that technology—in particular digital technology—would be the driving force behind all economic, political and social progress. Informatics was not just considered a synonym of modernisation; rather, it was expected to help countries to leapfrog and reach beyond the industrialised phase, entering directly into a new phase of informatisation of society, characterised by efficiency, unlimited productivity and rationality.<sup>147</sup>

Considering the societal aspects of IBI’s work as an asset to its own reflections, UNESCO supported the centre’s new focus and its efforts to become a functional organisation devoted to informatics through enhancing its programme cooperation with the institute and encouraging all its member states to accede to the organisation.<sup>148</sup>

Subsequently, financially stronger countries such as France and Spain, which had left the organisation a few years earlier, disappointed by the limited achievements, re-joined IBI in 1973. However, the majority of IBI’s member states remained developing countries, and its programme activities focused increasingly on the promotion of informatics in the developing world. With this attention paid to development, IBI was not alone within the international community. Indeed, in the early 1970s, both the UN General Assembly and UN ECOSOC adopted several resolutions, which encouraged research on the needs of

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<sup>146</sup> IBI, “Adoption of the sub-title Intergovernmental Bureau for Information Technology”, ICC-IBI 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, GA/54, Decision 3 adopted on 31 May 1967 (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code).

<sup>147</sup> IBI, “Considerations on the Social Effects of Informatics”, Documents on Policies for Informatics, Spin 205, July 1978, 13ff (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code).

<sup>148</sup> See UNESCO, “Scientific research and higher education”, 17 C/Resolutions, Resolution 2.21 adopted on 15-16 November 1972 (UNESDOC).

developing countries in the field of informatics.<sup>149</sup> In addition, between 1969 and 1972, the United Nations organised various expert seminars on this subject and, in 1971, a report was published on the application of computer technology for development, which emphasised the role that international organisations, in particular the different UN agencies, can play for the development of computer technology and training of specialists in the developing world.<sup>150</sup>

### **“New International Informatics Order” versus “informatics for development”**

In response to the growing international interest, IBI and UNESCO jointly organised the International Conference on Strategies and Policies for informatics (SPIN), the first intergovernmental conference to be explicitly dedicated to informatics policies and to the promotion of international cooperation in the field of informatics on a governmental level. While the original idea consisted in the combination of competences and relations of the two organisations, the joint preparation process gave rise to serious conflicts between UNESCO and IBI. IBI, convinced it was the only institution with competence in informatics, refused to recognise UNESCO’s expertise going beyond the limited field of education and scientific co-ordination. Conversely, UNESCO took offence at its small partner’s claim that it was competent in all aspects of informatics, and considered itself better prepared to cover the full range of subjects discussed in the preparatory process.<sup>151</sup> The SPIN conference, which took place in September 1978 in Torremolinos, Spain, with the participation of 300 representatives from 78 countries, aimed to raise awareness, amongst both developed and developing countries, of different aspects of digital technology for economy, administration, industry, society and education. UNESCO particularly emphasised access to computer technology as being a question of power and sovereignty. Taking over IBI’s techno-deterministic perspective, UNESCO’s Director-

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<sup>149</sup> See, for instance, UN ECOSOC, “International co-operation with a view to the use of computers and computation techniques for development”, E/5044, Resolution 1571 adopted on 14 May 1971, [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/resdec1946\\_2000.asp](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/resdec1946_2000.asp) (last accessed 5 May 2013).

<sup>150</sup> UN ECOSOC, “The application of computer technology for development. Report of the Secretary-General”, 49<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, E/4800, 20 May 1970, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED046461.pdf> (last accessed 5 May 2013).

<sup>151</sup> UNESCO, “Quelques problèmes posés par la collaboration avec l’IBI dans la préparation de la conférence SPIN”, Memo DADG/SC/OPS/6, 8 October 1976 (UA: 518.5 A01 ICC “67-6”). For instance, both organisations considered themselves to be the leading force behind a series of regional preparation meetings with local experts and government authorities, and claimed responsibility for thematic working groups, which conducted research on different aspects of informatics. See also Benchenna, “La création du programme international pour l’informatique. Contribution à l’histoire de la coopération Internationale en matière d’informatique”, 4.

General M'Bow called access to informatics and digital information a “phenomenon [...] synonymous with freedom” and described the future of societies as depending exclusively on their ability to keep abreast of the technological progress. However, he also remarked that the risk that informatics would remain mainly in the hands of just a few “could make it a redoubtable instrument of power, which could render many of the attributes of a State’s genuine independence or of individual and group initiatives null and void”; he consequently described independence in informatics as a precondition for sovereignty, and “a crucial factor in the establishment of a more just international order”.<sup>152</sup>

The claims for a balanced distribution of digital technology and more “sovereignty” and “independence” in the field of informatics clearly reflected the calls for new world orders in economy and information. Yet, the debate about informatics differed profoundly on one important point: in contrast to media and news flows, and to economic dependencies, access to digital information technology was a subject of less political disagreement. Due to the early developing state of computer technology, the production of hard- and software was concentrated in a very limited number of highly industrialised countries, while the informatics sector in the rest of the world was still in its infancy.<sup>153</sup> Hence, IBI and UNESCO presented all possible consequences of dependencies in the field of informatics as future scenarios, from which countries could be protected.

Even though the meeting’s final 44 recommendations remained very superficial compared with the in-depth research of the preparatory working groups, IBI and UNESCO considered the SPIN conference a success. In the period following the conference, the number of IBI’s member states rose to more than 40, increasing the organisation’s budget significantly. Nevertheless, France, Italy and Spain, the only three industrialised countries among IBI’s member states, had to provide nearly 90 percent of the total budget and sustain the developing countries among the member states with technology transfers.<sup>154</sup> At no point in IBI’s existence did any of the other developed countries show any interest in joining this small intergovernmental organisation with a limited budget situated in the South of Europe. Moreover, it seemed that IBI’s Director-General Bernasconi clearly

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<sup>152</sup> IBI, “Opening Address by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of UNESCO”, Proceedings of the SPIN conference, August-September 1978, 276ff (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code).

<sup>153</sup> This point was nicely described by one of the participants and picked up in the closing speech to the conference: “[W]hen it comes to informatics, all countries are developing countries”. See IBI, “Closing Address by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director-General of UNESCO”, Proceedings of the SPIN conference, August-September 1978, 282 (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code).

<sup>154</sup> UNESCO, “North-South Co-operation in the Field of Informatics”, 131 EX/22, 5 April 1989, 3ff (UNESDOC).

wished to stay independent from main industrialised countries and to establish IBI as an agency for developing countries instead.<sup>155</sup>

Only one year after the conclusion of the SPIN conference, Bernasconi started to plan a second world conference, intended to represent an important step towards the creation of what he liked to call a “New International Informatics Order”. Inspired by the movements for NIEO and NWICO, IBI’s director devoted many efforts to the idea of developing a similar set of principles with regard to digital technology and to establish IBI as the leading force behind a movement of developing countries fighting against Western dominance in the production and utilisation of computer technology.<sup>156</sup> With this ambition, in 1981, an IBI meeting produced the “Declaration of Mexico on informatics, development and peace”, which it considered to be the embryo of a global informatics charter, even though it was only signed by 12 countries. IBI’s discourse around the Mexico declaration took on an even more alarming and deterministic tone than before: it now linked informatics with the well-being of humanity in general and warned that if the world failed to solve the problems regarding the equal distribution of informatics, “it will never capture the interest of mankind and there will be neither informatics development, nor informatics, nor humanity. Even now, informatics and humanity are two sides of the same coin”.<sup>157</sup>

However, IBI was quite alone in its ambition. Although many developing and developed countries criticised the fact that a small number of Western companies (mostly from the US) were almost exclusively in control of the computer industry at that time, they considered informatics to be a “basic component of the international economic and information order” which did not necessarily need a “new order” of its own.<sup>158</sup>

Moreover, it is not surprising that UNESCO did not support IBI’s engagement for a new informatics order. Under constant criticism from Western countries, in particular from the United States, for its involvement in the NWICO debates, UNESCO could not have any interest in getting caught up in another movement so evidently directed against US

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<sup>155</sup> UNESCO, “Rapport de mission au IBI”, Memo DADG/SC/OPS/15, 6 December 1976 (UA: 518.5 A01 ICC “67-“).

<sup>156</sup> IBI, “L’informatique des années 80”, SPINCO, 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, May 1980 (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code). Mahoney described this as an attempt of IBI to fill an “increasingly vital, yet organizationally unoccupied, area” as there was, at that time, no other international organisation tackling in the issue of informatics in developing countries. See Mahoney, “The Intergovernmental Bureau For Informatics: An International Organization within the Changing World of Political Economy”, 299.

<sup>157</sup> IBI, “Automation and the information society”, *Agora* 14 (July/December 1982) (UA: Collection IBI Archives, no archive code).

<sup>158</sup> Cees Hamelink, “Informatics: Third World Call For New Order”, *Journal of Communication* 29, no. 3 (1 September 1979): 147.

market hegemony. IBI's attempts to foster national computer industries in developing countries in order to de-monopolise hardware production could not but displease the economic interests of the United States. As a matter of fact, the US government, which had at first been among the earliest members of UNESCO to elaborate a proposal for a Computing Centre in 1946, later refused any collaboration with IBI unless UNESCO played the role of intermediary.<sup>159</sup> Accordingly, the progressively political orientation of IBI, which went far beyond its original technical mandate, significantly increased the existing divergences between the two organisations. For this reason, UNESCO only joined the preparation of a second SPIN conference after ECOSOC officially invited all UN agencies to collaborate with IBI for the preparation of this event.<sup>160</sup> But in 1983, UNESCO's General Conference eventually decided to completely drop the idea of SPIN II in favour of a reinforcement of the organisation's own informatics activities.<sup>161</sup>

Instead of a "New International Informatics Order", IBI launched a Special Programme of Informatics for Development (SPINDE) in 1983. Three years after the establishment of IPDC during UNESCO's 21<sup>st</sup> General Conference, with SPINDE, IBI created a similar initiative that focused exclusively on digital technology. Like IPDC, SPINDE's main objective was to match the needs of developing countries with the resources available in industrialised parts of the world. And just as IPDC stands for a reorientation of UNESCO's engagement in communication geopolitics, the SPINDE programme was a sign of a fundamental change in IBI's strategy: the focus on development assistance consisting in a moderated dialogue and transfer of technology and knowledge between developed and developing countries represented a clear move away from politicised debates and ideologically motivated calls for new world orders. But in the same way as the establishment of IPDC was unable to prevent the withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain from UNESCO or the crisis that followed<sup>162</sup>, the conciliatory gesture coming from IBI was not able to calm its critics.

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<sup>159</sup> UNESCO, "Mission report Washington DC and New York", Memo SC/SER/D.111, 6 March 1978 (UA: 518.5 A01 ICC "67-"). In a study undertaken by UNESCO about its relationship with IBI, UNESCO further criticised the necessity to act as an intermediary between IBI and certain member states that disapproved of IBI's political stances. Without the document mentioning the name of these countries, it is most likely that the United States was among them (UNESCO, "UNESCO/IBI relations", Memo SC/SER/D.93, 24 October 1977 [UA 518.5 A01 ICC "67-"]).

<sup>160</sup> UN ECOSOC, "Second Intergovernmental Conference on Strategies and Policies for Informatics", E/1981/81/Add.1, Resolution 1981/52 adopted on 22 July 1981, [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/resdec1946\\_2000.asp](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/resdec1946_2000.asp) (last accessed 5 May 2013).

<sup>161</sup> UNESCO, "SPIN II", Memo SC/SER/IS/3100, 9 August 1984 (UA 518.5 A01 ICC "67-").

<sup>162</sup> Guillermo Mastrini and Diego de Charras, "'Twenty Years Mean Nothing'", *Global Media and Communication* 1, no. 3 (1 December 2005): 276.

## UNESCO's informatics programme

In 1984, UNESCO appointed an intergovernmental committee to prepare the creation of its own Intergovernmental Informatics programme (IIP), which was eventually launched in 1986. In order to avoid the same difficulties as IBI had had to face, from the very beginning, UNESCO explicitly tried to involve both industrialised and developing countries in its informatics programme and to collaborate with the private sector.<sup>163</sup> Although IIP was officially designed to complement IBI's activities, UNESCO was well aware that this programme would be considered a competitor by both IBI itself and by its member states. Indeed, governments would be tempted to withdraw from IBI, to which they had to pay additional contributions, and to engage in IIP, which was covered by UNESCO's regular budget.<sup>164</sup>

As a matter of fact, while UNESCO was planning and implementing IIP, IBI began to encounter serious problems concerning its financial and administrative situation. It was not a coincidence that, in 1984, the year the French scientist André Danzin took the presidency of the Intergovernmental Committee for IIP, France gave notice of its withdrawal from IBI. Several other governments followed suit, including the other two industrialised member states, Spain and Italy, which, instead, dedicated large amounts of money to the newly founded IIP.<sup>165</sup> Moreover, some developing countries were unable to pay their contributions. Thus, IBI's financial situation became increasingly precarious. Eventually, dissolution was decided in an extra-ordinary session in 1987, and took place in April 1988. UNESCO, unable or unwilling to absorb the 108 employees or the debts of US\$ 20 million, refused to incorporate IBI's programmes as an entity under its control and budget. Instead, it only took over those of IBI's responsibilities that were not already included in IIP, thereby extending its own activities in the field of informatics.

Due to the technological progress made in the 1980s and to its specific role within the UN system as an intellectual and cultural organisation, UNESCO founded its new programme on an understanding of digital technology, which differed considerably from IBI's and from its own earlier interpretation of informatics as a sciences or technique. Within IIP, digital technology was considered to be a tool for all kinds of human interactions. Thus, the focus shifted from the development of the computer industry and

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<sup>163</sup> UNESCO, "Setting up of the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme and of a Committee to be responsible for co-ordinating that Programme. Report by the Director-General", 23 C/14, 28 June 1985 (UNESDOC).

<sup>164</sup> UNESCO, "Projet de rencontre des Directeurs généraux UNESCO-IBI", Confidential Memo SC/SER/IS/126, 13 January 1984 (UA 518.5 A01 ICC "67-").

<sup>165</sup> UNESCO, "Final report", Interim Intergovernmental Committee for IIP, SC/MD 77, 21 February 1985 (UNESDOC).

the distribution of hardware to the teaching of and through means of informatics and the development of software and informatics policies adapted to specific regional, cultural and linguistic needs and traditions.<sup>166</sup> Consequently, the dissemination of technology was not considered an end in itself but an instrument to foster human interrelations, as the Interim Committee for the new programme declared:

“This free exchange of ideas and knowledge and this free circulation of ideas by word and image today depend very much on computers which, like communication and telecommunication, are only instruments, but are definitely essential instruments”.<sup>167</sup>

Furthermore, one of IIP’s objectives was to stimulate research on the changes brought about by information technologies in society and to link this reflection to concrete action via operational projects.

On a more administrative level, the creation of IIP “represented a strategic change in international cooperation concerning information technologies, moving from centralised to a decentralised model”.<sup>168</sup> Instead of being entirely dependent on a central office, the new programme was based on a network structure in which projects, deriving from propositions by member states, were carried out through institutes designated as national focal points.<sup>169</sup> In addition, the staff in charge sought to cooperate with the private sector, for example with IBM and, later, with Microsoft and Hewlett Packard, and to attract extrabudgetary projects through national sponsors or other UN agencies as a supplement to the limited financing under UNESCO's regular budget.<sup>170</sup>

The departure from the technologic-positivistic position of IBI, whose approach had also dominated UNESCO’s perspective during the earlier decades, and the choice of a more decentralised programme coordination have to be viewed in light of UNESCO’s situation after the withdrawal of the United States and Great Britain. In line with the new development paradigm introduced with IPDC in the field of communication and media, the creation of IIP also represented a shift from a thinking influenced by the modernisation paradigm towards an alternative approach. Within the modernisation paradigm, developing countries were supposed to go through a rapid phase of

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<sup>166</sup> André Danzin, “The Intergovernmental Informatics Programme”, ed. UNESCO and Taylor & Francis, *Impact of Science on Society* 146, The third industrial revolution (1987): 111.

<sup>167</sup> UNESCO, “Final report”, Interim Intergovernmental Committee for IIP, SC/MD 77, 21 February 1985, Annex III (UNESDOC).

<sup>168</sup> Cluzel, “Making Everything Compute”, 127.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>170</sup> Passman, “The Way It Was: UNESCO and Informatics, a Memoir”, 132.



development simply by stepping in the footsteps of the industrialised countries. However, the development perspective of IIP and IPDC focused more on the quality of the development than on its form and speed. It therefore aimed to determine the types of support and projects by taking into account the particular regional, cultural and traditional needs and problems of the country in question.<sup>171</sup>

Yet, as the communication scholar Veva Leye noted in her extensive study of UNESCO's perspective on communication for development, this newly introduced human development approach, with its exclusive focus on the individual and its particular conditions, accepted the global context as given and did not question overarching structural features of inequality.<sup>172</sup> Consequently, in both the area of mass media and that of informatics and digital technology, UNESCO eventually turned its back to questions and issues that challenged global political economic dynamics and focused on more practical projects and training activities.

### **2.3 Organising information: Policies for the growing information economy<sup>173</sup>**

A similar process of transition from a centralised, Western-dominated perspective to a more qualitative and development-oriented approach, which nonetheless avoided questioning political and economic realities, can also be observed in the third realm of UNESCO's work analysed in this chapter: the realm constituted by all activities that treated "information as a subject in and of itself".<sup>174</sup>

Most of these activities were associated with UNESCO's General Information Programme (better known as PGI, the French acronym for *Programme general d'Information*), an intergovernmental programme that was created in February 1977, at a time when theories about the information society and information economy first started to spread into the political sphere, and was dissolved in 2000 to give way to a new information programme, better adapted to the challenges of the digital age. But since UNESCO's

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<sup>171</sup> Skare Orgeret and Ronning, "Media in Development: An Evaluation of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)", 26ff.

<sup>172</sup> Veva Leye, "UNESCO's Communication Policies as Discourse: How Change, Human Development and Knowledge Relate to Communication", *Media, Culture & Society* 31, no. 6 (11 November 2009): 952.

<sup>173</sup> The title "Organising information" is taken from an article by Jacques Tocatlian, former director of UNESCO's General Information Programme (Jacques Tocatlian, "Organizing Information. The Origins and Development of UNISIST", in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005*, ed. UNESCO [Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2006], 129–30).

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

inception in 1945, and thus long before PGI was created, the organisation had been concerned with information matters and was therefore often described as the only UN agency with specialised programmes devoted to information *per se*.<sup>175</sup> In practice, these programmes dealt, on the one hand, with the organisation of and access to information through libraries, archives and specialised information services and, on the other hand, with the standardisation and exchange of information in science and technology.

As for the other two realms, both these fields of activities and their combination within the General Information Programme are interesting for this research for a number of reasons:

First, they allow for a better understanding of the two different professional communities involved in UNESCO's earlier information programmes, which later contributed significantly to the reflection on the information society and digitalisation. These professional groups provided different kinds of expertise and their beliefs were based on different traditions of information processing and, thus, on different ways of perceiving information. Secondly, within PGI and during its various restructuration phases, UNESCO developed ideas about the societal, economic and political role of information that created the basis for all later reflections on the information society. These ideas were clearly influenced by the theoretical thinking of the time, in particular by theories about the information economy and the post-industrial society. And lastly, within PGI, we can observe a major discrepancy between member states and professional groups that continued to play a key role during the later period under scrutiny in this thesis: the discrepancy regarding the role of governments in the formulation of overarching information policies and the control of the information market. The historical development of UNESCO's information programmes and the various positions involved in these programmes are, therefore, of crucial importance for understanding UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society.

In 1976, when the 19<sup>th</sup> session of UNESCO's General Conference decided to approve the creation of a General Information Programme, it did this with the ambition of finally ensuring the coherent development of UNESCO's work in the fields of scientific and technological information, documentation, libraries and archives.<sup>176</sup> During the previous years, growing concerns had been voiced by the relevant professional communities about

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<sup>175</sup> John Rose, "The Unesco General Information Programme and Its Role in the Development of Regional Co-Operative Networks", *Iatul Quarterly, Proceedings of the LATUL Conferences* 3, no. 4 (1989): 231.

<sup>176</sup> See UNESCO, "General Information Programme", 19 C/Resolutions, Resolution 5.1 adopted on 22 November 1976 (UNESDOC).

UNESCO’s various programmes in the field of information increasingly overlapping and creating confusion by approaching the same problems differently and, accordingly, advising member states in different ways.<sup>177</sup> UNESCO therefore decided to merge its two major information programmes, which consisted, on the one hand, in a library, archive and documentation programme called NATIS and, on the other hand, in UNISIST, an intergovernmental programme for cooperation in the field of scientific and technical information. Their merge also entailed an important institutional change as the two programmes had formerly been situated in different programme sectors: NATIS in the Department of Documentation, Libraries and Archives within the Communication Sector, and UNISIST in the Division of Scientific and Technological Documentation and Information within the Science Sector. The PGI was instead coordinated by the newly created Sector for General Programmes and Programme Support, and thereby located outside UNESCO’s usual programme sectors as it was initially considered an overarching programme that touched upon all fields of UNESCO’s mandate:

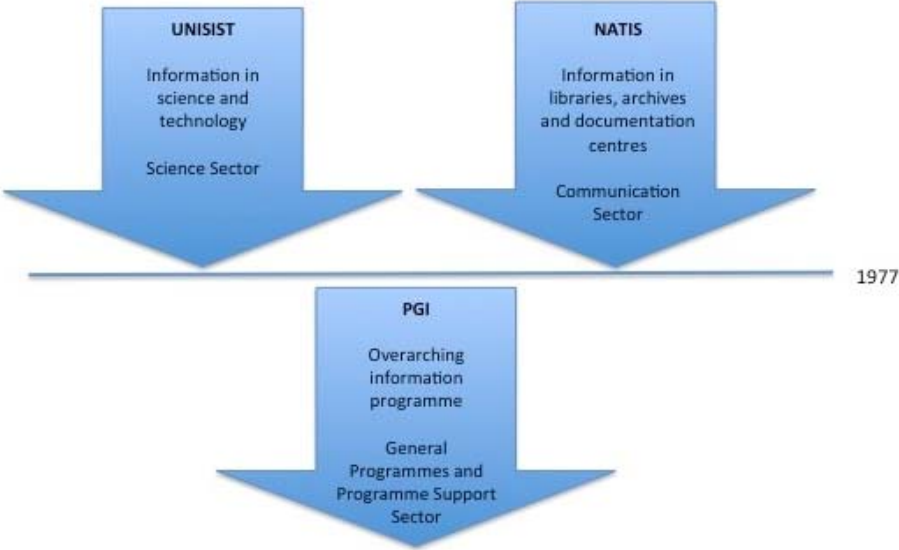


Figure 4: Merge of UNISIST and NATIS into PGI

In order to understand the importance of this merge for the period under scrutiny in this thesis and UNESCO’s reflection on the information society, it is useful to take a closer look at the historical background of the two programmes representing UNESCO’s origins in the field of information.

<sup>177</sup> ASIS&T, “Oral History Archive: Jacques Tocatlian”, 26 September 2012, <http://tocatlian.wordpress.com/2012/09/26/oral-history-archive-jacques-tocatlian> (last accessed 23 April 2015). These complaints are also reflected in numerous meeting reports of the mid-1970s, see e.g. UNESCO, “Report from the 5<sup>th</sup> session”, International Advisory Committee on Documentation, Libraries and Archives, COM/IACODLA/75/7, 21 October 1975 (UNESDOC).

## NATIS: information policies for archives, libraries and documentation centres

NATIS was created in 1974, following an intergovernmental conference on the planning of national infrastructures in the field of documentation, libraries and archives<sup>178</sup>, which had been organised with the support of the major professional organisations and UNESCO's most important partners in the field of librarianship, archives and documentation: the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)<sup>179</sup>, the International Council on Archives (ICA)<sup>180</sup> and the International Federation for Documentation (FID)<sup>181</sup>. The idea behind the NATIS programme was to provide UNESCO's member states with a set of guiding principles that would allow them to better coordinate their different information activities in the fields of archives and librarianship through the formulation of common policy objectives. It was based on an understanding of information as a resource that is accessible mainly via documents and other records stored in public libraries, archives and documentation centres. By supporting and coordinating these different public access points, governments were to provide their citizens with all types of information needed for the development of society, just as they were in charge of providing them with basic and secondary education.<sup>182</sup>

With this definition of information as a public resource, the programme was clearly opposed to views that regarded information as a commodity to which a certain value could be attributed, as many NATIS publications explicitly described:

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<sup>178</sup> The conference took place from 23 to 27 September 1974 at UNESCO's Headquarters. The recommendation to create NATIS was subsequently approved by the 18<sup>th</sup> session of UNESCO's General Conference (UNESCO, "Documentation, libraries and archives", 18 C/Resolutions, Resolution 4.201 adopted on 20 November 1974 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>179</sup> Although IFLA was founded in 1927 and thus almost two decades before UNESCO, the conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the two organisations in 1947 has been described as being for IFLA "the beginning of a period during which IFLA grew from what might have been dismissed as a gentlemen's club of middle-aged library directors to an international body which can claim to represent libraries and librarians worldwide" (Peter Johan Lor, "The IFLA-UNESCO Partnership 1947-2012", paper presented at the World Library and Information Congress, Helsinki, 2012, 1).

<sup>180</sup> ICA was founded on 9 June 1948, now celebrated as International Archives Day, as part of UNESCO's early efforts to promote non-governmental organisations in its fields of competence and remained one of its closest partners in the field of information and communication until today.

<sup>181</sup> FID (acronym of the French name *Fédération Internationale de Documentation*) was the oldest of the three organisations as it was founded as the International Institute of Bibliography in 1895. Like both others, it started its cooperation with UNESCO right after the latter's creation in 1945 and remained an important partner in the field of librarianship until its dissolution in 2002.

<sup>182</sup> Agnès Fleury, "Mise en perspective historique de l'UNISIST. Programme international de l'UNESCO pour la mise en place d'un système mondial d'information scientifique et technique 1967-1979", *Memoire de maitrise de Documentation et des Sciences de l'information*, Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, 1998, 86.

“Some writers have described information as a commodity. This concept has led to attempts to consider the market value of information the price the user is prepared to pay for it having regard to its value to him. [...] However, so far, this approach has not produced any useful results. Unfortunately, those who have regarded information as a commodity have not gone on to consider that if this were so it is a very strange sort of commodity. For instance, information can be transferred from A to B without the supplier, A, being any the poorer. Indeed, if the recipient, B, has no use for the information he may not be any the richer [...]”<sup>183</sup>

One can suppose that this perception of information was developed both during the short existence of the NATIS programme (1974-76) and as a result of UNESCO’s longstanding consideration of the role archives and libraries. As a matter of fact, drawing on the activities of its predecessor, the IICI, the support of national archives and libraries were among UNESCO’s very first concerns: the UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries was published in April 1946 as the first of many specialised journals issued by UNESCO<sup>184</sup>; in 1948, a seminar on public libraries held in Manchester is considered to have been the first seminar ever organised by UNESCO; and just three years later, in 1951, the public library of New Delhi became the first permanent institution to be established by UNESCO within one of its member states.<sup>185</sup>

In an extensive study about UNESCO’s library programme, the French researcher Céline Giton described UNESCO’s particular affinity for written public information resources as deriving from a merge of French and Anglo-Saxon book traditions. In French tradition, books are considered to contribute to the emancipation of individuals by enhancing their knowledge and their ability to reflect and to reason and, by doing so, to foster the exchange of ideas amongst well-educated individuals through the definition of shared cultural references. Contrarily, Anglo-Saxon tradition, in a less elitist manner, views books as a way of communicating information and as an indispensable means for education. In this view, books and similar information resources were considered to be a contribution to social and economic development and, hence, to the general well-being of society. Bringing together these two different but complementary perspectives, UNESCO’s information programmes focused on distributing books and periodicals in developing countries and countries devastated by war, (re)constructing public libraries and archives,

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<sup>183</sup> UNESCO, “National Information Policy”, NATIS Publication, COM.76/NATIS/6, 1976 (UNESDOC).

<sup>184</sup> Between 1979 and 1983, the publication continued, with a broader scope, under the name *The UNESCO Journal of Information Science, Librarianship and Archive Administration*, but was abolished in 1984 due to the important budget cuts after the US withdrawal: Hüfner and Reuther, *UNESCO-Handbuch*, 165.

<sup>185</sup> Sewell, *UNESCO and World Politics*, 125.

fostering the exchange of scientific journals and works of literary value, producing school manuals, translating famous authors and encouraging professional training and exchange programmes for teachers and information professionals.<sup>186</sup>

This two-sided understanding, which takes into account both the individual adoption of the information provided and its availability to the general public, was also visible in the NATIS programme: while libraries, archives and documentation centres were considered public service utilities that governments needed to provide in order to foster the economic and social progress of their countries, usage of the information by individuals was viewed as being driven by the search for knowledge, theory and new input for reflection. Despite being very broad, this perspective nonetheless remained purely a Western conceptualisation of information resources, which did not take into account the specificities of, and differences between, UNESCO's member states that were to implement the guidelines developed by NATIS on a national level.

### **UNISIST: Creating a world network for information resources**

While NATIS focused on providing access to information on the national level, the second information programme, UNISIST, was both much more specialised and more international. Its goal was to guarantee the global interconnectedness of national information systems in the fields of science and technology. It was born out of the international scientific community's concern that the “uncoordinated development of incompatible information systems and services in the 1960s was jeopardising the international exchange of scientific and technical information”.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the increased volume of available scientific information, the growing interrelations between scientific disciplines and the change from fundamental research to more applied research had led to a situation in which scientific data was more heterogeneous than ever before; and as a result, the systems for storing, indexing and referencing these data became increasingly diverse.<sup>188</sup> Consequently, many saw a growing necessity to harmonise information systems within countries and across national borders

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<sup>186</sup> Céline Giton, “La politique du livre de l’UNESCO (1945-1974)”, PhD thesis in History, Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris, 2012, 301.

<sup>187</sup> Tocatlian, “Organising Information. The Origins and Development of UNISIST”, 129.

<sup>188</sup> UNESCO, “UNISIST: Synopsis of the feasibility study on a World Science Information System”, SC.70/D./74/A, 1971, 23ff (UNESDOC).

and to establish some kind of “flexible and loosely connected network of information systems and services based on voluntary co-operation.”<sup>189</sup>

In response to this demand, UNESCO conducted a study on the feasibility of a World Science Information System in 1971, in collaboration with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU)<sup>190</sup>, a non-governmental organisation representing the global professional community of scientists.<sup>191</sup> The results of this study contained important conceptual and epistemological reflections on the role of information as a universal resource for national and international scientific communities.<sup>192</sup> They were submitted to an intergovernmental conference in October 1971, the UNISIST I conference. A year later, in 1972, the UNISIST programme was officially launched by UNESCO’s 17<sup>th</sup> General Conference.<sup>193</sup> Its main objectives were to coordinate existing trends towards cooperation in the field of scientific and technical information and to provide the conceptual framework for a network of interconnected scientific documentation services cooperating across national border in order to promote the harmonic circulation of qualitative scientific and technical information. It was initially limited to information produced and used in natural sciences and engineering, but was later extended to social sciences and humanities in order to cover all fields of UNESCO’s mandate.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Kenneth H. Roberts, “UNESCO’s General Information Programme, 1977-1987: Its Characteristics, Activities and Accomplishments”, *Information Development* 4, no. 4 (10 January 1988): 7; Rose, “The Unesco General Information Programme and Its Role in the Development of Regional Co-Operative Networks”, 232.

<sup>190</sup> ICSU was founded in 1931 and changed its name to *International Council for Science* in 1998. It was the first non-governmental organisation with which UNESCO established an official agreement of cooperation. It receives regular subventions by UNESCO and maintains close working relations that have led to a number of important international programmes in the field of science. For more details, see also Martens, “The Role of NGOs in the UNESCO System.”

<sup>191</sup> See UNESCO, “UNISIST: Etude sur la réalisation d’un système mondial d’information scientifique”, SC.70/D./75/F, 1971 (UNESDOC). The study had been initiated in April 1966, through an exchange of correspondence between the Director-General of UNESCO and the President of ICSU, and was approved in November 1966 at the 14<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference (UNESCO, “Improvement of scientific and technical documentation and information”, 14 C/Resolutions, Resolution 2.222, no precise date [1966] [UNESDOC]).

<sup>192</sup> Fleury, “Mise en perspective historique de l’UNISIST”, 33.

<sup>193</sup> See UNESCO, “Scientific and technical information”, 17 C/Resolutions, Resolution 2.131 adopted on 15-16 November 1972 (UNESDOC). In contrast to most UNESCO programme names, the word ‘UNISIST’ is not an acronym but was invented by the authors of the feasibility study in order to “connote phonetically the part that the United Nations agencies, in particular UNESCO, should play in the promotion of an international system for information covering science and technology” (Rose, “The Unesco General Information Programme and Its Role in the Development of Regional Co-Operative Networks”, 232). Its letters represent different concepts like United Nations, UNESCO, standardisation of methods and efforts, international information system, science and technology etc.

<sup>194</sup> UNESCO, “The inclusion of the social sciences in the UNISIST programme”, UNISIST Steering Committee, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, SC/UNISIST/ST.COM.II/4, 12 September 1975 (UNESDOC).

Although most of UNESCO's member states recognised the importance of information for research and technical development and agreed on the need to harmonise and standardise scientific databases and information systems, the implications of the Cold War, clearly visible in the NWICO debates about information imbalances, did not stop short of information in the field of sciences. From its beginnings, the UNISIST project was strongly influenced by the perspectives of the United States and other industrialised countries. The UNESCO-ICSU joint Central Committee undertaking the feasibility study was chaired by Harrison Brown, Foreign Secretary of the United States National Academy of Sciences. It was also supported by the Ford Foundation and the US State Department, which viewed the new programme as an opportunity to confirm the United States' technical and scientific superiority and, at the same time, to weaken the Soviet influence in the field.<sup>195</sup> This Western domination of UNISIST encountered complaints by representatives of communist countries and, to a much smaller extent, developing countries. But unlike the NWICO movement, this opposition did not provoke any major diplomatic crisis within UNESCO.

However, the increasing political interest in scientific and technical information and its usage for national economic development significantly influenced the general direction of the programme. UNISIST was initially developed as an international programme made by scientists for scientists, which was supposed to allow intellectual elites to exchange information resources without interference by governments. But from the mid-1970s, it was perceived more and more as an intergovernmental programme at the service of UNESCO's member states rather than the global scientific community. Accordingly, member states started to expect UNISIST to be sensitive to the economic and political interests of states and to provide governments with some kind of consultancy or guidelines on how to use their valuable scientific and technical information more efficiently.<sup>196</sup> Fleury therein sees the ambiguity of a technical programme like UNISIST: In order to create the network of information systems that UNISIST was aiming for, scientists needed to rely on intergovernmental decisions and interventions to create national, regional and international infrastructures. They thereby grew increasingly

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<sup>195</sup> Chloé Maurel, "L'UNESCO de 1945 à 1974", PhD thesis in Contemporary History, Université Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne, 2005, 308. It also appears that only four out of the 16 members of the Central Committee represented the Communist bloc, while the developing countries were not present at all (UNESCO, "UNISIST: Synopsis of the feasibility study on a World Science Information System", SC.70/D./74/A, 1971 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>196</sup> Fleury, "Mise en perspective historique de l'UNISIST", 85.



dependent on governments and eventually saw their project being taken over by governmental interests.<sup>197</sup>

As a consequence of this development, the programme was later expected to exchange information through a loose network and to provide policies for the more efficient systematisation and usage of scientific information within a country. In this regard, it eventually showed similarities with the archives and library programme NATIS. The idea of uniting them in one unique, overarching information programme was therefore not far off. In 1977, the merge was eventually concluded and PGI incorporated the two programmes under the structure that had been designed for UNISIST; as a matter of fact, while UNISIST continued to exist within PGI under its original name, the acronym NATIS was dropped.<sup>198</sup> Instead, the concepts and recommendations on the planning of national library, archive and documentation infrastructures were added to the UNISIST objectives.

In conclusion, it can be noted that, although NATIS and UNISIST started as clearly distinct but complementary programmes in the early 1970s —NATIS being in charge of supporting governments in developing policies that allowed for better access to general information retained in libraries, archives and documentation centres; and UNISIST as specialised information programmes for scientists, enabling the international scientific and technical community to exchange information more easily—, within just a few years of existence, both progressed in a manner that led to a significant overlap of their concrete activities. This was due, in the first place, to the progressive correlation between different kinds of information that made it difficult to distinguish between their origins, usage, systematisation and the institutions in charge of the information. And secondly, the convergence of the two programmes was provoked by the subliminal politicisation of UNISIST, which had moved from being a programme for scientists to an intergovernmental programme at the service of member states.

As a consequence, the perception of information also shifted. In UNISIST's feasibility study, scientific information was still defined as an international resource that is independent from its direct context:

“It constitutes an essential resource for the work of scientists. It is a cumulative resource; knowledge builds on knowledge as new findings are reported. It is an

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Roberts, “UNESCO's General Information Programme, 1977-1987”, 8. According to a former staff member, the name NATIS was banned from the organisation as a result of the personal and administrative conflicts that had preceded the merge of the two programmes (Yves Courier, Personal interview, 20 February 2014).

international resource, built painstakingly by scientists of all countries without regard to race, language, colour, religion or politic persuasion.”<sup>199</sup>

But over the years, information was increasingly perceived as a strategic national value, whose creation and exchange has important economic consequences for both developed and developing countries.<sup>200</sup>

## **PGI and Information for Development**

The politicisation of UNISIT resulted in yet another consequence: two years after NATIS and UNISIST were merged into PGI, UNESCO held a second UNISIST conference which led to the extension of the programme’s mandate towards a more development-oriented approach to information. This UNISIST II conference took place in May 1979 and served primarily to develop UNESCO’s input to the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD), a major UN event held in Vienna, in August 1979. Although the UN event did not discuss UNESCO programmes, it is part of the broader context in which PGI was created. As a matter of fact, the UNCSTD conference in Vienna was organised as “the last of the United Nations ‘mega conferences’ of the 1970s addressing issues relating to a new international economic order”. It aimed to respond to calls by developing countries for “better access to the world’s stock of science and technology” and to overcome the “growing disagreements between ‘North’ and ‘South’ over such matters”.<sup>201</sup>

The political nature of this ambitious objective was reflected during the conference by major confrontations between developing and industrialised countries regarding different financial solutions for technology transfer. The disputes made it clear that there was an important shift in the attitude of developing countries, which increasingly sought endogenous technical and scientific capacities and tailor-made technical solutions to replace their dependency on more technologically advanced countries.<sup>202</sup> In addition, the conference led to the establishment of a new political body within the UN General

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<sup>199</sup> UNESCO, “UNISIST: Synopsis of the feasibility study on a World Science Information System”, SC.70/D./74/A, 1971, Preface (UNESDOC).

<sup>200</sup> Fleury, “Mise en perspective historique de l’UNISIST”, 86.

<sup>201</sup> UN ECOSOC, “Consideration of Ways and Means of commemorating in 1999 the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vienna Conference on Science and Technology for Development”, Commission on Science and Technology for Development, E/CN.16/1997/7, 11 March 1997, 6, [http://unctad.org/en/docs/ecn16\\_97d7.en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/docs/ecn16_97d7.en.pdf) (last accessed 7 May 2015).

<sup>202</sup> Anil Agarwal, “United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD)”, *Environmental Conservation* 7, no. 1 (1980): 77.

Assembly, whose successor, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), is still in charge of preparing all resolutions concerning global issues like the “digital divide” or events such as the WSIS summit and its follow-up. For all these reasons, the UNCSTD provides a good illustration of the general shift in attention that the United Nations underwent during the period when PGI was created and equally oriented to more development-oriented objectives.

In this broader context, the new key objective that emerged from the UNISIST II conference in 1979 was “to meet the needs of development planners, policy-makers and administrators at one end of the user spectrum and, at the other, the people on the grassroots level”.<sup>203</sup> Subsequently, activities carried out under PGI were increasingly focused on enhancing the capacity of UNESCO’s member states to handle, transfer and share information resources and to effectively utilise them for the purpose of development. Like IIP (the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme founded in 1984), PGI tried to associate its activities with the member states through national information focal points and national committees, and regularly organised regional seminars in which representatives of the national liaison offices could exchange experiences.<sup>204</sup>

Particular attention was first paid to the special needs of the least developed countries and then to the generation and utilisation of local information. Indeed, instead of simply transferring information systems and information resources from the North to the South, developing countries were encouraged to develop “endogenous capabilities” through education and training, thereby becoming less dependent on the industrialised world:

“UNESCO, within its General Information Programme, seeks to develop a strategy that will foster the development of national information systems and services operated by qualified national staff, and that will not only facilitate the flow of information but also increase national capabilities for innovative development, for creativity, and for making the optimum use of local and international information resources. Such a national capability to manage its own

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<sup>203</sup> Jacques Tocatlian and A. Neelameghan, “International Cooperation in Information Systems and Services”, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 36, no. 3 (1985): 155. Interestingly, this shift also led to a minor change in the description of the UNISIST programme: while, before 1979, it was referred to as a ‘programme for international cooperation’, it was then called an ‘intergovernmental programme for cooperation’. As Fleury accurately observed, this demonstrated once more the shift from an independent programme in the hands of scientists seeking greater international cooperation in their fields towards a programme dominated by states and dependent on intergovernmental agreements (Fleury, “Mise en perspective historique de l’UNISIST”, 85ff.

<sup>204</sup> Jacques Tocatlian, “Information for Development: The Role of Unesco’s General Information Programme”, *Unesco Journal of Information Science, Librarianship and Archives Administration* 3, no. 3 (1981): 152. An information focal point was usually a national agency responsible for coordinating national information policies, while a national committee for UNISIST was a consultative body that advised governments on all aspects of information exchange. By 1981, more than 30% of UNESCO’s member states had created these liaison agencies.

information resources is of prime importance for any country wishing to achieve and maintain real independence. The capacity to manage and analyse its national information places each country in a position where it can identify alternative courses of action and work out solutions for its own problems.”<sup>205</sup>

With these ambitious objectives for PGI, UNESCO tried to respond to the calls of less advantaged countries —once more— with a turn towards a development perspective. And just as it was the case for the field of media and digital technology, the shift in strategy was a response to calls for new global orders. But in contrast to the other two movements, the call for more independence in scientific and technical information had not primarily been uttered by developing countries but by the professional communities in charge of these types of information. Indeed, during the late 1970s, scientists and information professionals expressed concerns that Western developed countries, such as the United States and some European countries, held monopolies over the production and usage of technical and scientific data, increasing the gap between the developed and the developing world. In 1979, an issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique*<sup>206</sup> was dedicated to “La guerre des données” (The war of data) and brought together a series of articles in which leading French scholars in the field of technical information and information systems criticised the Western hegemonic position and the progressive consideration of scientific data as a commodity.<sup>207</sup>

With references to the NWICO movement, one of the articles compares UNISIST’s goal to create a world network giving access to the “global information resource” with “un nouvel ordre mondial de la documentation” (a New World Documentation Order).<sup>208</sup> The authors, however, seemed particularly pessimistic about UNESCO’s ambition with regard to UNISIST, since —as they claim— the organisation did not even have any authority over other international organisations or UN agencies which, despite UNISIST, continued to develop and use their own competing information systems. In their opinion, UNESCO could therefore not be expected to establish unique standards and norms for information databases on a global level, and this mainly because its member states did not conceive scientific and technical information as a global resource but rather as a value that

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>206</sup> *Le Monde Diplomatique* is a French monthly newspaper that is commonly considered to take a left-wing perspective on global politics, culture and current affairs. Since the 1950s, it has closely followed the Non-Aligned-Movements and the concerns of developing countries, and regularly reports and comments on UNESCO and its various activities.

<sup>207</sup> Antoine Lefebure and Maurice Ronai, “La guerre des données: Un Nouvel Ordre Mondial de la documentation (1979)”, *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 1979): 16-17.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 16f.

one would not place at the disposal of other countries for nothing more than moral benefit.<sup>209</sup>

## UNESCO and the information economy

The shift towards a more development-oriented approach for PGI was not simply motivated by UNISIST's limited success in establishing cross-border standards, norms and structures that would facilitate the free exchange of scientific data on a global scale. Moreover, it reflected the increasing economic value that the international community had started to attribute to information. Instead of working towards a free and open exchange of scientific and technical information via a network, as was originally planned for the UNISIST programme, the industrialised countries amongst UNESCO's member states preferred to provide development aid to help developing countries to enter the logic of the globalised information economy. In return, the developing countries opened up new markets for the commodity of scientific and technical information.<sup>210</sup>

Following this logic, the economic aspects of information and the progress of member states towards an "information economy" became PGI's new overarching objective. This was exemplified by UNESCO's Director-General M'Bow in his opening speech at the UNISIST II conference in which he proclaimed that "UNISIST is now directed towards the social and economic value of scientific and technological information for development".<sup>211</sup> And indeed, over the entire period of the 1980s, the PGI staff made considerable efforts to reflect, from a critical perspective, about the growing perception of information as a commodity and the consequences for developing countries. It is possible to say that these reflections, much more than those in the field of media and ICT, prepared the ground for UNESCO's later perspective on the information society and its economic, social and cultural impact.

UNESCO's early reflections on the information economy need to be seen in their historical context, as they did not occur in a vacuum but were clearly influenced by the theoretical thinking of their time. As the following chapter will discuss in more detail, the early theoretical reflections about the growing importance of information and expert knowledge were indeed theories of the information economy as they defined the coming

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<sup>209</sup> Fleury, "Mise en perspective historique de l'UNISIST", 90.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>211</sup> Tocatlian, "Information for Development: The Role of Unesco's General Information Programme", 157.

of a new type of era or society through changes in the economic and occupational sphere.<sup>212</sup> By doing so, these theoretical reflections, which later became known as the first theories on the information society, also introduced a new understanding of “information policy”, which went beyond the previously prevailing understanding. While information policies had, until then, been seen as part of science policy, and a concern thereof, they were now framed as a matter of economic policy. Accordingly, policy-makers became increasingly receptive to the creation of systematic national information policies, which were at the time mostly understood as “a series of decisions taken by a national government, which are designed to encourage a better information infrastructure”.<sup>213</sup> The preoccupation thereby shifted from the growth and management of scientific and technical data and publications to a larger understanding that included all types of information-related activities and knowledge-based activities.<sup>214</sup>

This shift is also visible in UNESCO’s recommendations concerning national and regional information policies. After PGI’s creation, information policies were no longer limited to political efforts “to promote the establishment and strengthen the functioning of basic information, documentation, library and archives services at the national level”; instead, PGI was based on a wider concept of information policy that was adapted to the “role of information in economic and social development”.<sup>215</sup> PGI’s director Jacques Tocatlian expressed this broader perception in more detail:

“[T]he socioeconomic level of a nation or its capacity for development appears to be closely linked to its capacity to mobilize and use information effectively in activities related to development – research and development, technology transfer, industrialization, business, management, planning, etc.”<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Fritz Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

<sup>213</sup> Elizabeth Orna, “Information Policies: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow”, *Journal of Information Science* 34, no. 4 (June 13, 2008): 550.

<sup>214</sup> In a study about the history of the “information economy”, the Canadian historian Godin argues that the concept is intimately linked to the measurement of information-related and knowledge-based activities and to attempts of standardising the methods for measuring. In that regard, he studies the efforts of the OECD to measure scientific and technical documentation —a goal also pursued by UNESCO— which later turned into statistical measurement of information technology, see Benoît Godin, “The Information Economy: The History of a Concept Through Its Measurement, 1949-2005”, Working paper, Project on the History and Sociology of S&T Statistics (Quebec, 2008).

<sup>215</sup> UNESCO, “Projects in information policy and planning”, 1<sup>st</sup> session of the Advisory Committee for the General Information Programme, PGI/ADV.COM./I/5, July 1977, 1ff (UNESDOC).

<sup>216</sup> Tocatlian and Neelameghan, “International Cooperation in Information Systems and Services”, 162.

Yet, the PGI staff also realised that the growing information economy represented a particular threat to developing countries that lacked the adequate information relevant to national needs and that were unable to make effective use of the available information. Following the conviction that development needs to be endogenous and closely related to the countries' own culture and traditions, the advent of the information industry represented an obstacle for the poorer countries. Only the highly industrialised countries disposed of the human resources, financial means and technical capability to create and maintain a large and functioning information economy. The field of information was thus more than ever subjected to market forces.

In addition, the growing range of informational products and services was designed for industrialised markets and not necessarily adapted to the needs of the developing world.<sup>217</sup> For this reason, the PGI secretariat developed guidelines for national information policies, which should render information resources and services more responsive to the economic, social and political needs of the specific country. In 1990, UNESCO published a first practical handbook on national information policies, addressed to professionals involved in the management of information resources and services and the government officials responsible for this field.<sup>218</sup> In addition, it organised a number of regional meetings on information policies and assisted up to 80 member states in the formulation of national information policies.<sup>219</sup> However, while some countries responded positively to these efforts, others fiercely opposed the very idea of unique policies by which the information economy should be coordinated and regulated on a governmental level.

These difficulties in establishing national and regional information policies were not due only to diverging interests among member states with regards to the transfer and distribution of information resources. In a comparative study about information policies in different countries, the information specialist Nick Moore identified two broadly divergent models of the manner in which countries responded to the idea of an information economy. While one model places emphasis on the state to which they attribute a significant role for planning, coordinating and, in large parts, financing the creation of information infrastructures, the other model is determined by neo-liberal economic thinking that emphasises the importance of market-led initiatives and the role

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<sup>217</sup> Tocatlian, "Information for Development: The Role of Unesco's General Information Programme", 148ff.

<sup>218</sup> UNESCO, *National Information Policies. A Handbook on the Formulation, Approval, Implementation and Operation of a National Policy on Information*, ed. Victor Montviloff, PGI-90/WS/111990, 1990 (UNESDOC).

<sup>219</sup> Victor Montviloff, Personal interview, 21 October 2013.

of the private sector.<sup>220</sup> As Moore describes, the latter is predominant in the developed world, particularly in the United States and Europe, where the turn to an information economy is seen as a manner of securing the countries' social standing and its position in the global economic system. The more state-centred model is instead mainly pursued by developing and newly industrialised countries, which seek "a path towards future prosperity through accelerated economic growth" and "the key to solving long-term socio-economic problems".<sup>221</sup>

Both perceptions were visible in the responses of member states to PGI's efforts of encouraging and establishing the creation and adoption of overarching national information policies. While many of the developing countries amongst UNESCO's member states, supported by the majority of Eastern European countries, endorsed the idea of state-regulated information policies, others considered that these kinds of policies could only be sector specific and should only be implemented if they could contribute the better distribution of specialised information. The latter would be the case in particular for sectors in which liberalised market forces do not secure a sufficient distribution of information, for instance in the field of culture and education.<sup>222</sup>

In addition, it can be assumed that the experience of the NWICO debate and its consequences contributed to the opposition to centralised information policies by these countries. The idea of UNESCO fostering state intervention in the field of information certainly alarmed many member states' representatives and staff members. How much this episode of UNESCO's history impacted on the reaction of governments to all initiatives that the organisation is undertaking in the field of information and communication becomes even more apparent when looking at the period in which it first responded to the new digital information infrastructures, and thus the period under scrutiny in this thesis.

## Chapter conclusion

The last three sub-chapters delineated UNESCO's activities in the field of media, digital technology and information from the organisation's inception in 1945 until the late 1980s.

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<sup>220</sup> Nick Moore, "The Information Policy Agenda in East Asia", *Journal of Information Science* 23, no. 2 (4 January 1997): 139-47; Nick Moore, "Policies for an Information Society", *Aslib Proceedings* 50, no. 1 (31 December 1998): 20-24.

<sup>221</sup> Moore, "Policies for an Information Society", 21.

<sup>222</sup> Peter Canisius, "Informationspolitik oder Nicht?", *UNESCO Heute* 7-8 (1990): 173.



Even though for some programmes the turning point may have occurred earlier, the year 1989 is often regarded as a key moment in the history of UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector. During its 25<sup>th</sup> General Conference, which took place in November 1989, the organisation adopted a New Communication Strategy as part of the third medium-term-plan for 1990-1995. Six days after the Fall of the Berlin Wall, which had, more than anything, symbolised the Cold War's divide between countries, this new strategy made it clear that UNESCO was trying to leave behind the politicised debates and ideological struggles that had marked its first 40 years of efforts in the field of media, communication and information technology. Instead, its member states expressed that

“it is perhaps the time to take the lessons of past experience to heart and to explore the possibilities of a new strategy whereby the Organization's global objective may be attained in such a manner as to dispel the misunderstandings”.<sup>223</sup>

In light of the spirit of a new era that the end of the Cold War would herald, it is easy to comprehend the enthusiasm with which the present governmental representatives hoped to get past the political controversies of the NWICO debate and other geopolitical tensions. Yet, the New Communication Strategy of 1989 did not contain any indications of how UNESCO was planning to overcome the structural economic, cultural and social differences that had given cause to calls for new world orders. Instead, it reaffirmed the free flow of information paradigm that had already characterised the period prior to NWICO and the development approach that had been introduced with IPDC, IIP and PGI in the 1980s.<sup>224</sup> In addition, it added—for the first time—the study of the socio-cultural and economic impact of new communication technologies to its main priorities.<sup>225</sup> It thereby introduced “topics that [...] [were] fundamentally shifting the policy contexts away from the analysis of the underlying historical, political and economic factors that have created inequities in global communication toward a view that such problems can best be dealt with through the application of new technologies”.<sup>226</sup> And as a

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<sup>223</sup> UNESCO, “Communication in the Service of Humanity”, Medium-Term Plan for 1990-1995, 25 C/Resolutions, Resolution 104 adopted on 15 November 1989 (UNESDOC).

<sup>224</sup> The three main programme lines included in the New Communication Strategy were (1) “The free flow of information, and solidarity”, (2) “Communication for development” and (3) “The sociocultural impact of new communication technology”. Since the attention entirely shifted away from the structural questions of NWICO, Carlsson considered that “the 1989 General Conference marked the ultimate failure of the non-aligned countries to bring about new principles for information and communication in the world” (Carlsson, “The Rise and Fall of NWICO. From a Vision of International Regulation to a Reality of Multilevel Governance”, 53).

<sup>225</sup> Alain Modoux, “Vom Kalten Krieg ins Zeitalter der neuen Technologien”, *UNESCO Heute* 1-2 (1995): 120-23.

<sup>226</sup> Vincent, “The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the Context of the Information Super-Highway”, 11.

matter of fact, the 1989 General Conference marked, in some way, the beginning of an overarching reflection on the impact of digital technology for all fields of UNESCO's mandate.

Even though the New Communication Strategy mainly concerned UNESCO's activities regarding media and communication, it also marked a starting point towards a stronger integration of its various programmes related to information and ICTs. As was clear, until this moment, the three realms of activities had evolved rather independently from each other. For a long period, they were not even considered to relate to the same field of UNESCO's mandate. While all programmes and projects regarding media and mass communication were linked to the constitutional mission of "advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image", the programmes related to books, archives, scientific information and information processing were seen instead as being part of the activities in the field of sciences and education and, thus, as being based on the mission to "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge [...] by encouraging cooperation among the nations in all branches of intellectual activity, including the international exchange of persons active in the fields of education, science and culture and the exchange of publications, objects of artistic and scientific interest and other materials of information".<sup>227</sup> Consequently, for several decades, the various activities were located within different departments and sectors of the organisation and were not therefore interrelated from an institutional perspective.

In addition, the professional communities that UNESCO relied on in order to plan and carry out its programme activities differed for the three fields: The group most involved in UNESCO's media and communication programmes was made up mainly of journalists, media experts and communication scholars, many of whom cooperated through institutions such as the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC), the International Federation of Newspaper Editors (FIEJ), the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) and the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR).<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

<sup>228</sup> The history of IAMCR is intimately related to UNESCO, whose Committee on Technical Needs in the Mass Media drafted a plan, in 1946, for an "International Institute of the Press and information, designed to promote the training of journalists and the study of press problems throughout the world". Based on this proposal, in 1956, UNESCO's General Conference encouraged the creation of an international association of national research institutes in the field of mass communication. One year later, the

Besides the official cooperation with the International Bureau of Informatics (IBI), whose staff was mainly composed of technical specialists and computer scientists, UNESCO cooperated closely with the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) for all activities related to informatics and digital technology. Similar professional groups were also involved in the activities related to scientific and technical information, many of whom were represented by the International Council for Science (ICSU).

In addition, they were joined by archivists, librarians and information scientists, who had been strongly involved in UNESCO's archives and book programmes since the organisation's inception, and were represented by institutions such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Federation for Documentation (FID). After the merge of UNISIST and NATIS, these groups continued to play an important role for the activities carried out under PGI.

The following figure visualises the three realms of UNESCO's activities related to information, their evolution and the professional groups involved in them:

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constituent assembly of IAMCR took place at UNESCO's Headquarters. Since then, the two organisations have cooperated on numerous occasions and many IAMCR members have been working as experts and consultants to UNESCO's communication and information programmes. For more details about IAMCR's history and its relation to UNESCO, see Kaarle Nordenstreng, "Institutional Networking: The Story of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)", in *The History of Media and Communication Research: Contested Memories*, ed. David W. Park and Jefferson Pooley (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); Hamid Mowlana, "IAMCR: A Historical Perspective", paper presented on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of IAMCR, IAMCR Annual Conference, Oaxaca, 1997, <http://iamcr.org/hist-perspective> (last accessed 5 May 2015).

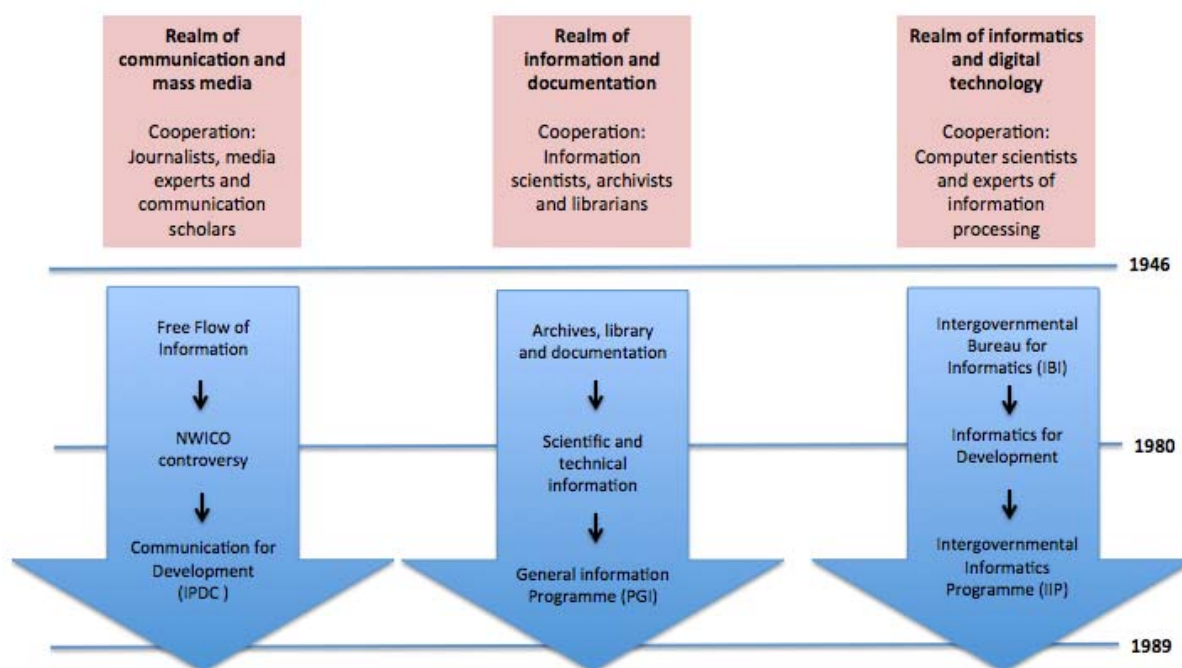


Figure 5: Evolution of the three realms of UNESCO programmes dealing with information until 1989

Despite the relatively independent evolution of these three realms, it is possible to observe some common threads that characterised the first decades of UNESCO's information-related activities and programmes:

First of all, in all three realms, the organisation was confronted with the difficulty of finding a balance between member states in favour of strong governmental regulation and those who —for different reason and following different interests— refused governmental intervention in the field of media and information. This opposition, which led to a progressive politicisation of the debates that took place within UNESCO's governing bodies, can be seen as the thread that affected the political level of the organisation's information programmes. In the realm of media and communication, it was most visible during the debates around the New World Information and Communication Order. Similarly, in the field of informatics, the opposition became apparent when IBI's ambitious call for a New International Informatics Order repulsed many of UNESCO's industrialised member states; this increased the tensions that already existed between the two organisations and eventually led to IBI's dissolution. Furthermore, in the realm of information and documentation, this political tension affected UNESCO's support of national information policies, which was strongly opposed by member states that saw in it an intolerable governmental interference with the autonomous forces of the information economy.

Secondly, on a more discursive level, it is possible to see, in all three realms, a discrepancy between the perception of information as a resource and the understanding of information as a commodity. While in the realm of media and communication, this discrepancy was visible from the early beginnings and can be considered as one of the origins for the major conflicts that dominated UNESCO's communication activities, it appeared much later in the other two realms. As a matter of fact, in the information and the informatics activities, we can note a shift from one perception towards the others instead. This became particularly apparent in the General Information Programme (PGI), whose predecessors —NATIS and UNISIST— were explicitly built on a perception of information as a resource and a public good, but later took a different stance by describing information as a national value and commodity whose commercial value has an important impact on the information economy.

And thirdly, in all three realms, UNESCO tried to overcome the conflicts arising from differences on the political and discursive level through changes on the institutional level, which consisted, in all fields, in introducing a development approach and a shift of attention from the structural to the contextual and individual levels. In the realm of media and communication, IPDC was created in 1980 in an attempt to overcome the political impasse provoked by the heated debates around NWICO. Likewise, in 1983, IBI founded SPINDE in order to move away from the politicised debates of the preceding years and to replace them with a more moderate dialogue on development assistance and technology transfer; this was then continued by UNESCO's own informatics programme, IIP. In a similar way, for the field of information, in 1979, the UNISIST II conference introduced a new development priority within PGI, which consequently paid increasing attention to enhancing the capacity of UNESCO's member states to handle, transfer and share information for the purpose of development and the information economy. In addition, while in earlier years the emphasis had been placed on structural conditions of global imbalances that hampered developing countries from reaching the level of the industrialised world, all three development programmes started to focus on the regional, cultural, social and economic context of UNESCO's member states and the capacities of the individuals to make efficient use of communication and information in order to contribute to the development of these countries.

The following figure shows the three common threads that characterise the evolution of the three realms of media, informatics and information:

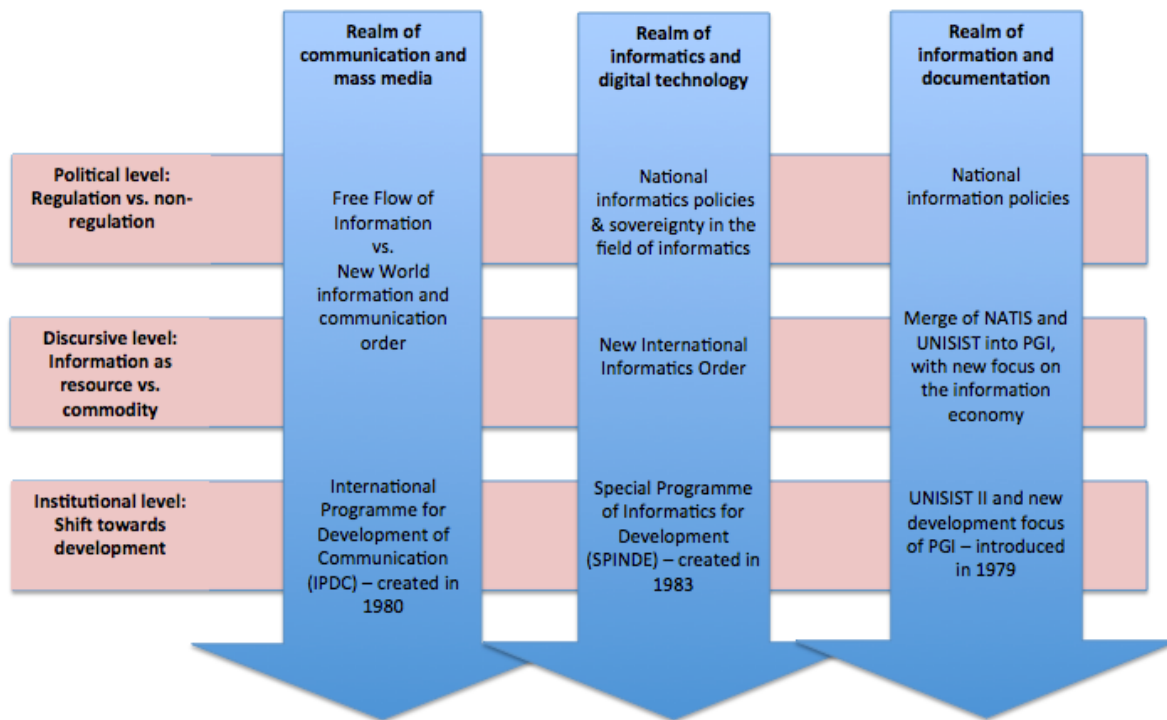


Figure 6: Common threads in UNESCO's information programmes (1946-1989)

Still in the euphoric mood that followed the end of the Cold War, in 1990, UNESCO created a new Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics (CII), which, for the first time, united all realms of UNESCO's work dealing with information in the large sense into a common institutional structure. With this move, the organisation tried to leave behind both the political struggles of the past and the increasingly artificial and unjustified separation of the different programme realms dealing with information and communication. But as the following decades would show, the new spirit of political and institutional optimism could not bridge the discrepancies among UNESCO's member states. Also, after 1989, the struggles linked to divergent interests, opinions, convictions and traditions that had impacted UNESCO's activities until that moment continued to make it difficult for the organisation to develop a clear overarching strategy for its programmes in the field of communication, information technology and information. This becomes clearly visible in the 1990s when UNESCO tried to develop a coherent response and political discourse about the chances and challenges of the upcoming information society.

### **3. Thematic background: Information society policies before the World Summit on the Information Society**

Before proceeding to the empirical analysis of UNESCO's response to the information society, it is useful to complement the introduction to UNESCO as a specialised agency of the UN system and to its history in the field of communication policies with a more detailed outline of why the period under scrutiny in this thesis is of particular interest. In fact, it was during the 1990s and the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century that debates about digital technology and its impact on economy and society took a central stage position on both the national and the international level. Thus, during this time, all national and international actors involved in communication and information policy-making had to respond and develop convincing policy discourses which allowed them to position themselves vis-à-vis the new technological and societal circumstances.

The concept of the information economy had already started to appear in the policy discourse of various Western governments during the 1980s. The technological changes gave hope that digital technology and the new information and communication technologies could foster economic development. Yet, it was not until the early 1990s that governments in many countries took structured policy action and proposed the creation of national information infrastructures and the formulation of national policy initiatives. The idea behind these initiatives was to ensure physical infrastructures that would allow countries and peoples to benefit from the advantages of digital technology. Influenced by the theoretical and academic debate on the information society, which flourished during the same period, these initiatives were often linked to a market-liberal approach to telecommunication.

Once the importance of structured policy efforts relating to information infrastructures was recognised by a certain number of governments, it is possible to observe two main tendencies in the evolution of policy discourses on the information society: First, there was a tendency towards a globalisation of the policy discourses on the information society, which emerged in some Western, highly developed countries and were subsequently taken over by many developing countries and international organisations. While many of them initially adopted the market-liberal perspective promoted by the industrialised countries, it is also possible to observe —and this is the second tendency— that the discussion moved away from a debate about just infrastructures and economy towards a debate on the role of information and knowledge in development and in

processes of social change.<sup>229</sup> The attempts to find a common policy strategy for this evolution resulted in the organisation of the World Summit on the Information Society, which took place in two phases in 2003 and 2005 and was hosted by the International Telecommunication Union.

This last chapter of Part I briefly introduces the theoretical shift from debates on the information economy to policy discourses about the information society. It further describes the general evolution of these discourses during the period under scrutiny in this thesis and their culmination in the World Summit on the Information Society. The chapter's aim is to prepare the thematic ground for the understanding of the position that UNESCO —as one particular actor in the broad field of international communication and information policies— took with regard to the opportunities and threats of the digital age.

### 3.1 From the information economy to the information society

Many authors position the beginning of policy debates on the information society in the first theories that broached the issue of the growing importance of information for national economies and society at large.<sup>230</sup> Although there was certainly no single origin for these theories, it is possible to retrace them to Japan in the early 1960s, and soon after to the United States and other developed countries. These different theoretical streams were united by their evolutionist perspective, which believed that the increasing

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<sup>229</sup> This expansion and shift of the policy discourse on the information society was first described in Leo Van Audenhove et al., “Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy: The Dominant Scenario and Its Application in the Developing World”, *Communicatio* 29, no. 1 (2003): 79-113, and later further developed in Leo Van Audenhove, Julia Pohle, and Luciano Morganti, “Discourses in International Information Society Policy before the World Summit on the Information Society”, paper presented at the International Colloquium “From WSIS to NWICO – 30 years of Communication Geopolitics. Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides”, Paris, 2010.

<sup>230</sup> There is a vast amount of literature that retraces the history and different interpretations of the information society concept. This sub-chapter only aims to give a short overview of the historical origins of the concept and to introduce its influence on policy thinking. For structured overviews of the theoretical studies of the information society see Isabel Alvarez and Brent Kilbourn, “Mapping the Information Society Literature”, *First Monday* (7 January 2002), <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/922/844> (last accessed 5 May 2015); Susan Crawford, “The Origin and Development of a Concept: The Information Society”, *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 71, no. 4 (October 1983): 380-85; Alistair S. Duff, *Information Society Studies* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); Armand Mattelart, *The Information Society: An Introduction* (London: Sage, 2003); Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society* (Cambridge: Routledge, 2002).



importance of information and knowledge would lead to economic progress and, eventually, to a better type of society.

In Japan, the concept of an “information society” or “informatised society” (*‘johoka shakai’*) was first proposed by the Japanese anthropologist Tadao Umesao in 1964 as part of a stage theory of societal evolution, before being introduced to the larger public through several books published by Yujiro Hayashi, Yoneji Masuda and Konichi Kohyama between the late 1960s and the early 1980s.<sup>231</sup> These authors pictured the information society as an entirely new type of society, fundamentally different from the industrial society as its development and economic success would be based on the production of information instead of material products. With the progress towards this new type of society, Japan could overcome the structural economic problems it was facing since the first oil price crisis at the beginning of the 1970s.<sup>232</sup> Hence, the development of these early theories in Japan can be seen as a response to an industrial crisis, motivated by the objective to maintain the country’s economic power. Consequently, although the Japanese authors explicitly used the term “information society” and pictured the progress towards more social equity and well-being, their theories were first and foremost theories of the information economy as they picked out changes in the economic sphere as the central theme.

This dominant economic emphasis was shared by the early information society theories in the West, which also emerged during the 1960s and 70s. They equally tried to define the coming of a new type of society through changes in the economic and occupational sphere, as they outlined the move from an agricultural and industrial society towards an information and knowledge based economy. They were thus based on similar ideas to those the Japanese theories were based on but used different terminology to describe the changes and the emergence of an information economy.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Yujiro Hayashi published “Johoka shakai: hado no shakai kara sofuto na shakai e” (“The Information Society: From Hard to Soft Society”) in 1969 and therefore competes with Yoneji Masuda, who published “Joho Shakai Nyumon” (“Introduction to an Information Society”) in 1968, for the title of “father of the information society.” Masuda later published a longer version of his book (“Genten johoka shakai: kikai kaihatsusha no jidai e” – “The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society”, 1980), which was translated into many languages and contributed to the diffusion of the information society concept. For a detailed history of the Japanese origins, see László Z. Karvalics, “Information Society—what Is It Exactly? The Meaning, History and Conceptual Framework of an Expression”, Course book (Budapest, May 2007), 29ff, [http://lincompany.kz/pdf/Hungary/02\\_ZKL\\_final2007.pdf](http://lincompany.kz/pdf/Hungary/02_ZKL_final2007.pdf) (last accessed 5 May 2015).

<sup>232</sup> Manuel Castells, *End of Millennium*, vol. 3, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 251. See also Verena Metzke-Mangold, “Information und Deutungshoheit – die Rolle der Medienpolitik”, in *Kultur und Außenpolitik. Handbuch für Wissenschaft und Praxis*, ed. Kurt-Jürgen Maaß (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015), 209.

<sup>233</sup> Sandra Braman, *Change of State: Information, Policy, and Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); Alistair S. Duff, “The Past, Present, and Future of Information Policy: Towards a Normative Theory of the

In particular, the influential work of the Austrian-American economist Fritz Machlup, “The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States”<sup>234</sup>, is often considered “to contain the original proof of the startling proposition that an advanced industrial society, namely the USA, was on the way to developing a new type of economy, the ‘information economy’”.<sup>235</sup> Machlup’s work, published in 1962, was based on two main empirical arguments, namely that a large part of the United States’ gross national product could be accredited to activities related to information, and, additionally, that a major part of the US workforce would be employed in information-related occupations. About ten years later, in 1973, the American sociologist Daniel Bell further developed this idea in his seminal study about the “The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society”<sup>236</sup>, in which he based the definition of a post-industrial society on the increase of “white-collar workers” and the high numbers of employments in the service economy.<sup>237</sup>

But while Machlup centred his argumentation on production and dissemination of ‘knowledge’ and its role for employment and income statistics and Bell concentrated on changes in social and occupational structures, it was Marc Uri Porat who clearly focused on *information* rather than *knowledge* and, thus, eventually established the concept of an “information economy” as a point of reference for both research and policy. Drawing on parts of Machlup’s argumentation, in 1977, Porat published *The Information Economy*, a nine-volume study based on research conducted for the US Department of Commerce and its Office of Telecommunications, in which he proposed a more sophisticated way of quantifying information activities.<sup>238</sup> However, the basic hypothesis behind Porat’s work remained the same as in earlier theories: in his regard, a society should be considered an

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Information Society”, *Information, Communication & Society* 7, no. 1 (January 2004): 71. For more details about the evolution of Information Economy approaches, see also Sandra Braman, “The Information Economy: An Evolution of Approaches”, in *Information and Organization*, ed. Stuart Macdonald and John Nightingale (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science B.V., 1999), 109-25.

<sup>234</sup> Machlup, *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*.

<sup>235</sup> Duff, *Information Society Studies*, 21ff. Without denying the importance of Machlup’s work, many scholars criticised its methodological and argumentative weaknesses. In an interesting analysis of the origins of Machlup’s thinking, the Canadian researcher Godin tries to contradict this common criticism by describing Machlup’s approach as a synthesis of ideas deriving from four research fields, namely philosophy/epistemology, mathematics/cybernetics, economics and national accounting: see Benoît Godin, “The Knowledge Economy: Fritz Machlup’s Construction of a Synthetic Concept”, Working paper, Project on the History and Sociology of S&T Statistics (Quebec, 2008).

<sup>236</sup> Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*.

<sup>237</sup> Both Machlup, and Bell were often criticised for their one-sided view on societal changes as they both based their analysis on purely quantitative measurements instead of seeking to understand the qualitative transformations that the increasing role of information and knowledge entailed (see, for example, Webster, *Theories of the Information Society*, 32ff).

<sup>238</sup> Godin, “The Information Economy: The History of a Concept Through Its Measurement, 1949-2005”, 25ff.

information economy when the economic sector related to the production, storage, exchange or usage of information, “was proportionately more important vis-à-vis other economic sectors than it had been in the past”.<sup>239</sup>

Porat’s work was also influential in another way, which is of particular importance for the study undertaken in this thesis. As the British information society researcher Alistair Duff claimed, he can also be seen as

“probably the firmest starting point for information policy. [...] Porat actually employed the term ‘information policy’, using it thoroughly and systematically, including supplying a definition and the first detailed English-language typology. He also approached information policy in the all-encompassing multi-disciplinary sense in which it tends now to be understood, and, as a result, was one of the first writers in the west to vigorously promote the ideal of a national information policy”.<sup>240</sup>

But neither Duff, nor any other scholar of information policies would claim that the history of information policy only began with the first theories on the information society. While the information scholar Sandra Braman starts her history of information policies with the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church<sup>241</sup>, others see the UK Ministry of Information, created in 1917, and the US Office of War Information, set up in 1942, as the first institutions to establish some kind of information policy.<sup>242</sup> Yet, they all agree that the 1970s and 1980s marked the real starting point for systematic public policies with regard to information on the national and international level since the idea of establishing information policies seems intrinsically linked with the conceptualisation of a post-industrial society as an information economy. It was only when information stopped being perceived as simply a concern of science policy, and began to be seen as a commodity that has a commercial value and represents a crucial supply for the national economy, that policy-makers recognised the significance of coherent information policy approaches.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Sandra Braman, “The Micro- and Macroeconomics of Information”, *ARIST* 40 (2006): 19. During the same period, two French officials, Simon Nora and Alain Minc, published a very successful report about the computerisation of society, which outlined the societal and economic changes and called for policy actions to counter the risk that the United States was to control the European information industries and networks. See Simon Nora and Alain Minc, *L’informatisation de la société* (Paris: La Documentation française, 1978).

<sup>240</sup> Duff, “The Past, Present, and Future of Information Policy”, 73.

<sup>241</sup> Braman, *Change of State*, 44ff.

<sup>242</sup> According to Orna, the earliest use of the phrase ‘information policy’ in relation to governments referred to propaganda in World War I, see Orna, “Information Policies”, 548.

<sup>243</sup> Godin, “The Information Economy: The History of a concept through its measurement, 1949-2005”, 6.

Consequently, the beginning of information society policies on the national level can be construed not only as a result of the changes occurring in the economic and occupational sphere and the theoretical reflections provided by Machlup, Bell, Porat and others, but also as a consequence of the changing perception of information.<sup>244</sup> Before this moment, information was most often defined as a resource, understood as “something that an entity—a person, an organization, or a community—must have in order to function”.<sup>245</sup> This was also the understanding that was dominant in most policy-making arenas, in particular when considering the public policies relating to libraries, archives, databases and other forms of information production, storage and access, as the last chapter outlined with regard to UNESCO’s information programmes. Yet, many theorists have observed a shift that took place during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from a conceptualisation of information as a resource to information as a commodity:

“Information is a commodity when it is something that we buy and sell. The growth of the information economy has vastly expanded the use of such definitions; while information about supplies and prices has been considered a commodity for hundreds of years, only in the past few decades have personal information, information that is public in the sense of having been collected by the governments to service public ends and information about information all come to be treated as commodities.”<sup>246</sup>

From a political economy perspective, which looks primarily at the interests of powerful actors, this shift has been explained as part of the advancement and success of the capitalist system over the course of the last century.<sup>247</sup> Following this perspective, information was subordinated to the monetised logic of capitalism, which attributed it economic value and integrated it in the market.

However, in her seminal work on the history of the information policy domain, Braman described the choice of one perception of information over another as a political decision, which—deliberately or not—has important consequences for the resulting policies.

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<sup>244</sup> Over the last decades, the disciplinary definitions and historical understandings of the term “information” have been analysed by many authors, including those who assessed the growing importance of information policies. For some extensive examples, see Sandra Braman, “Defining Information: An Approach for Policymakers”, *Telecommunications Policy* 13, no. 3 (September 1989): 233-42; Rafael Capurro, *Information. Ein Beitrag zur etymologischen und ideengeschichtlichen Begründung des Informationsbegriffs* (Munich; New York: Saur Verlag, 1978); Rafael Capurro and Birger Hjørland, “The Concept of Information”, ed. Blaise Cronin, *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 37 (2003): 343-411; Luciano Floridi, *Information: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>245</sup> Braman, *Change of State*, 12.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>247</sup> Vincent Mosco, “Introduction: Information in the Pay-per Society”, in *The Political Economy of Information*, ed. Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 3; Dan Schiller, *How to Think about Information* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 8ff.

Besides the conceptualisation of information as a resource or commodity, she also identified other ways to perceive information that impact on policy proposals.<sup>248</sup> Amongst these various conceptualisations, it is the one of information as a “constitutive force in society” that is of particular importance for the understanding of policy discourses of the information society since it appears to underlie many advanced theoretical reflections of the information society.

According to Braman, theories and policies that define information as a constitutive force in society emphasise the ability of information and of information flows to shape its social context: “Information is not just affected by its environment, but affects its environment as well.”<sup>249</sup> This perception therefore grants information a crucial power in constructing the social and material reality and, thus, helps to explain the importance attributed to information during the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The author who certainly contributed most to understanding the impact of information and information infrastructures on society at large was the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells. Between 1996 and 1998, he published a trilogy called “The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture”, in which he definitely left behind information society concepts that were based on the measurements of information and its value for economy.<sup>250</sup> Instead, he proposed a holistic account of the structural features of modern societies, their social forces and the political consequences.

By describing the modern world as a networked society, in which the social, economic and political spheres are intrinsically interconnected, Castells was one of the first authors to try to comprehensively retrace the workings of a world strongly impacted by global digital networks. Hence, he did not focus on national economies or societies within national borders, like the earlier theorists, but related his theory to the more global level by paying particular attention to the structural inequalities caused by globalisation processes and by what he calls “informational capitalism”. According to Castells, the global interconnectedness not only brought about a higher integration of people into the network society (inclusion) but also fragmentation and disintegration (exclusion), deteriorating the life of those who cannot participate in the network but are nevertheless affected by it. Consequently, it is fair to say that Castells proposed a holistic theory of an

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<sup>248</sup> Braman, *Change of State*, 21. These other conceptualisations are information as a perception of pattern, as an agent, as a basin of possibility and as a constitutive force of society. According to Braman, at different stages of policy-making processes, policy-makers should take different definitions of information into account in order to acknowledge the variety of interests and perspectives.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>250</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society, vol. 1, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity, vol. 2, The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); Castells, *End of Millennium, vol. 3*, 1998.

information society, which did not rely on utopic visions of future economic and social well-being but, instead, allowed for more nuanced and critical perspectives on the possible drawbacks of a digitally interconnected world.

This more comprehensive vision of an information society, coupled with a shift in the perception of information —from a resource to a commodity and, eventually, to a constitutive force of society— was also reflected in the discourses that policy-makers developed in response to the pervasiveness of information and digital technology. This was particularly visible in the 1990s, and thus the period under scrutiny in this thesis, when debates about digital infrastructures started to emerge on both the national and international level.

### 3.2 National policies for the creation of information infrastructures

While Japanese theorist might have been the first to put the potential of the information into words, it was in the United States that structural information policies gave action to those words. After World War II, the US government had feared that its country could lose its hegemonic position in the global economy; hence, it recognised the need for structural change from the civil production of material goods to a new approach that would account for the growth of national, regional and even global markets for informational goods and services. Inspired by the various theoretical reflections and national reports, the question of digital technology and its economic and social consequences appeared as early as the 1970s and 1980s in the US policy discourses, always coupled with the idea that liberalisation and deregulation should be extended to cultural and informational goods.<sup>251</sup>

Although the same reports also led to concrete policy actions in a number of other countries, they remained restricted to specific sectors and never resulted in a coherent, overarching approach to the changes triggered by digital technology and information. A significant shift took place in 1993, when the then US Vice-President Al Gore presented the US plan to develop a nation-wide information superhighway and thereby launched a more intense debate about possible —in particular market supporting— policy actions.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Metze-Mangold, “Information und Deutungshoheit – die Rolle der Medienpolitik”, 209f.

<sup>252</sup> Van Audenhove et al., “Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy”, 81ff. According to Braman, Al Gore was not the first person to use the term “information superhighway”, which already appeared in the work of the video artist Nam June Paik during the 1970s, and was introduced into wider policy circles by the US Senator Mark Hatfield in 1989. See Braman, *Change of State*, 53.

In his report about the creation of a National Information Infrastructure (NII), Al Gore promised to provide every citizen with suitable information, whenever and wherever required, at an affordable price.<sup>253</sup> To this end, the report defined the NII in a broad manner, emphasising the development of physical infrastructure, and including the applications and the software permitting the dissemination of information as well as the standards and protocols needed to ensure interconnection. It thereby described the NII as a main driver of societal change:

“Development of the NII can help unleash an information revolution that will change forever the way people live, work, and interact with each other.”<sup>254</sup>

In addition, the NII report provided a vision of the information highway’s social and economic importance and proposed the policy agenda for reaching this vision. One of the core elements of this policy agenda was the idea that the creation and operation of the NII should be primarily driven and financed by the private sector. Therefore, a precondition for the agenda’s implementation was the introduction of competition in telecommunications and related sectors. By enabling the opening of the telecommunication market, the government’s role was limited to a supporting role, rather than a regulating role and consisted, among other things, in stimulating technological innovation, ensuring network stability and universal service provision as well as protecting privacy and intellectual property rights.<sup>255</sup>

After the NII concept was proposed by the USA, similar ideas emerged simultaneously in many Western countries.<sup>256</sup> European governments were particularly quick in taking over the United States’ discourse about the liberalisation of telecommunication infrastructures, thereby replacing the metaphor of the “information highway” with the broader concept of the “information society”.<sup>257</sup> The most prominent example of how the topic of information infrastructures and the neo-liberal discourse of the information economy were taken up in the West was the European Commission’s “White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: the challenges and way forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century”,

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<sup>253</sup> United States, *The National Information Infrastructure: Agenda for Action*, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, Information Infrastructure Task Force (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Commerce, 1993).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>255</sup> Van Audenhove et al., “Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy”, 83ff.

<sup>256</sup> Mary Dykstra Lynch, “Information Highways”, in *World Information Report 1997/98*, ed. Yves Courrier and Andrew Large (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1997), 286.

<sup>257</sup> Herbert Kubicek, William H. Dutton, and Robin Williams, eds., *The Social Shaping of Information Superhighways: European and American Roads to the Information Society* (Frankfurt; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 10.

issued in 1993.<sup>258</sup> It officially acknowledged that the implementation of an information society was critical for the future of Europe and proposed the creation of a common information area based on a number of interacting levels like hardware, physical infrastructure, basic telecommunication services and applications. But in addition, it also stressed the importance of taking into due account the European characteristics of multilingualism and cultural diversity.<sup>259</sup>

Only one year later, in 1994, the European Commission published the final outcome of the work of a High-Level Group on the Information Society, which was chaired by Commissioner Martin Bangemann. This group pushed the neo-liberal policy approach even further as it emphasised the importance of commercial competition for the development of information societies in Europe.<sup>260</sup> However, despite this coherence with the US approach, the early European discourse on the information society differed from Al Gore's NII agenda in that, as well as describing the creation of an information infrastructure as a matter of domestic economic policy, it framed it as a response to the pressures and constraints of global competition in the information economy.<sup>261</sup>

A similar market-liberal approach that was also often protectionist was also taken in most member states of the European Union and by other Western governments. According to a comparative analysis of policy initiatives in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, published by OECD in 1996, almost all countries proposed that a NII should be developed to prepare the transition towards an information society and a new phase of economic growth, marked by rising productivity, job creation, and a general improvement of the quality of life.<sup>262</sup> However, several countries paid explicit attention to cultural diversity, which had already been emphasised in the European Commission's White Paper of 1993. In

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<sup>258</sup> European Commission, *White Paper on Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Way Forward into the 21st Century* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 1993).

<sup>259</sup> Van Audenhove, Pohle, and Morganti, "Discourses in International Information Society Policy before the World Summit on the Information Society", 8ff.

<sup>260</sup> High-Level Group on the Information Society, *Europe and the Global Information Society, Recommendations to the European Council* (Brussels: European Council, 1994). For more details about the early European approach to the information highway and the information society, see also Michael Niebel, "The Action Plan of the European Commission", in *The Social Shaping of Information Superhighways: European and American Roads to the Information Society*, ed. Herbert Kubicek, William H. Dutton, and Robin Williams (Frankfurt; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 61–67.

<sup>261</sup> Volker Schneider, "Different Roads to the Information Society? Comparing U.S. and European Approaches from a Public Policy Perspective", in *The Social Shaping of Information Superhighways: European and American Roads to the Information Society*, ed. Herbert Kubicek, William H. Dutton, and Robin Williams (Frankfurt; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 345.

<sup>262</sup> OECD, *Information Infrastructure Policies in OECD Countries*, OECD working papers 4, no. 100 (Paris: OECD, 1996), 6.



particular the Canadian, French and German policy documents expressed the fear of an over-dominance of content of Anglo-Saxon origins, which resulted in a more implicit concern for the future of their countries' own cultural industry.<sup>263</sup>

This combination of information society policies with concerns over linguistic and cultural diversity is particularly interesting for the topic of this thesis as it was within UNESCO that these concerns were taken to the intergovernmental level and discussed by the international community. Thus, part of the empirical analysis of this thesis is the assessment of how the question of cultural diversity emerged as an important paradigm at UNESCO during the early 2000s and subsequently influenced the discussions about norms and values in the global information society, once these were equally debated on a more international level.

### 3.3 International policies for the global information society

The ideas about information infrastructures were taken to the international stage in March 1994 when the US Vice-President transferred his plans for an NII to the global level. In fact, many authors describe Al Gore's intervention at ITU's first World Telecommunication Development Conference in Buenos Aires, in which he proposed the creation of a Global Information Infrastructure (GII), as the starting point for the international debate about the global information society.<sup>264</sup> In his speech, Al Gore not only propagated the potential economic benefit of a global network of networks but also emphasised its social advantages and the promise of increased interpersonal and intercultural communication:

“[...] we now have at hand the technological breakthroughs and economic means to bring all the communities in the world together. We now can at last create a planetary information network that transmits messages and images with the speed of light from the largest city to the smallest village on every continent. [...] To accomplish this purpose, legislators, regulators, and business people must do this: build and operate a Global Information Infrastructure (GII). This

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<sup>263</sup> For a detailed analysis of several countries' information infrastructure policies, see Brian Kahin and Ernest J. Wilson, eds., *National Information Infrastructure Initiatives: Vision and Policy Design* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997). For a rare and interesting analysis of developing countries' NII initiatives, see Eduardo Talero, “National Information Infrastructure in Developing Economies”, in *National Information Infrastructure Initiatives: Vision and Policy Design*, ed. Brian Kahin and Ernest J. Wilson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 287–306.

<sup>264</sup> See, for example, Christine L. Borgman, *From Gutenberg to the Global Information Infrastructure: Access to Information in the Networked World* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2000), 23.

GII will circle the globe with information superhighways on which all people can travel.”<sup>265</sup>

Drawing on this first vision of a global information society, the question of a shared global infrastructure, which would enable and empower people all over the world to communicate and participate in the new “digital era”, was discussed by a large number of international and regional organisations and NGOs. In addition, this globalisation of the policy discourse on the information society was accompanied by a trend of shifting the attention to other aspects than technical infrastructures: like national debates in Europe, international discussions about the information society also slowly started to consider social and cultural aspects as well as content and capacity-related questions. Moreover, on the crossroad of the two discourse streams —one focused on infrastructures and the other on social aspects— another perspective emerged, which became increasingly prominent by the end of the century: the question of the role that knowledge and access to information play for development.<sup>266</sup>

An initiative for international cooperation in creating a global information society that was still strongly influenced by the market-liberal, technology and economy focused perspective of the early NII policies, was the G7 Ministerial Conference on the Information Society. It took place in February 1995 in Brussels and resulted in a “shared vision of human enrichment” which clearly reflected the interests of the industrialised countries, in particular with regard to competition, private investments and securing access to networks and services.<sup>267</sup> In addition, the same tone was prominently expressed by documents and reports of the International Telecommunication Union. Primarily concerned with telecommunications policy, ITU had traditionally emphasised the significant role that governments had to play for the implementation of communication infrastructures. Yet, in the second half of the 1990s, the organisation’s rhetoric followed the general trend and shifted towards free market thinking, based on liberalisation and privatisation, and emphasising the importance of this approach for the development of infrastructures in the developing world.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> ITU, “Inauguration of the First World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-94)”, Remarks prepared for delivery by Al Gore, U.S. Vice-President, Buenos Aires, 21 March, 1994, [http://www.itu.int/dms\\_pub/itu-s/oth/02/01/S02010000414E05PDFE.PDF](http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/oth/02/01/S02010000414E05PDFE.PDF) (last accessed 20 May 2015).

<sup>266</sup> Van Audenhove et al., “Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy”.

<sup>267</sup> G7 Ministerial Conference on the Information Society, “Chair’s Conclusions”, Brussels, 1995, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_DOC-95-2\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_DOC-95-2_en.htm) (last accessed 22 July 2015).

<sup>268</sup> Geert Nulens and Leo Van Audenhove, “An Information Society in Africa? An Analysis of the Information Society Policy of the World Bank, ITU and ECA”, *International Communication Gazette* 61, no. 6

At this time, ITU was not the only institution that started to concentrate its attention on development and on what became known as the “digital divide” between North and South, meaning the gap between those countries and social groups that have access to digital technology and those that don’t.<sup>269</sup> Another prominent example of an information society policy initiative focusing on development was the Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society, produced by the G8 at its Kyushu-Okinawa Summit Meeting in 2000.<sup>270</sup> Recognising that the “digital divide” was about “to exacerbate the existing social and economic inequalities between countries and communities”, it proposed the setting-up of a Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force), which would bring together different stakeholders in a cooperative effort and “identify ways in which the digital revolution can benefit all the world’s people, especially the poorest and most marginalized groups”.<sup>271</sup> An action plan proposed by the DOT Force and endorsed by the G8 at its Genoa-Summit in 2001 clearly went beyond the policy discourse that had marked the earlier G7 documents; among other measures, it proposed to counter the growing global divide through initiatives of ICT inclusion, e-health and the promotion of local content. But, while the action plan certainly made the neo-liberal discourses of the G8 more social and inclusive, the DOT Force initiative —as Van Audenhove et al. remarked— was “still very much top-down driven and embedded within a Western technologically determinist discourse that the implementation of ICTs would lead automatically to advances in terms of economic as well as social development”.<sup>272</sup>

Similar approaches were taken by other international organisations that propagated the role of telecommunications in development, such as the World Bank. While resiliently emphasising the potentials of ICTs, the World Bank’s World Development Report 1998/99, however, considerably shifted the discussion towards the importance of knowledge as a central factor in economic growth and well-being. Hence, technical

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(1999): 461ff. See also International Telecommunication Union, *The African Green Paper. Telecommunications for Africa* (Geneva: ITU, 1996).

<sup>269</sup> The literature on the digital divide and policies addressing it is vast. For some authors who question the dominant rhetoric of the digital divide, see for example Eric George, “L’expression de fracture numérique en question”, in *Mesures de l’internet*, ed. Eric George (Paris: Editions des Canadiens en Europe, 2004), 152–65; Siobhan Stevenson, “Digital Divide: A Discursive Move Away from the Real Inequities”, *The Information Society* 25, no. 1 (January 2009): 1–22.

<sup>270</sup> G8, “Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society, Okinawa”, July 2000, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2000okinawa/gis.htm> (last accessed 22 July 2015).

<sup>271</sup> DOT Force, “Digital Opportunities for All: Meeting the Challenge”, Report of the Digital Opportunity Task Force, May 2001, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2001genoa/dotforce1.html> (last accessed 22 July 2015).

<sup>272</sup> Van Audenhove et al., “Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy”, 8.

infrastructures were considered to be just a part of a wider development strategy, with ICT serving as a support for knowledge acquisition, processing and application.<sup>273</sup>

At the same time, at the margin of the policy discussions on knowledge and development, a debate began to evolve around the social and cultural aspects related to the possible transition towards a global information society. In 1997 already, and thus only a few years after the publication of the Bangemann report, a High Level Expert Group of the European Commission (HLEG) presented a report that reflected on the importance of the “social embeddedness” of the information society.<sup>274</sup> In fact, as well as outlining the possibilities, the report also focused on the risks brought about by digital technologies. Thus, it went far beyond questions of infrastructure deployments and, instead, raised issues such as social exclusion, education, culture, media and democracy, and pointed out that radical institutional reforms would be required for the realisation of the potentialities of ICTs.

The need for structural reforms, which would allow the international community to benefit from the potentials of digital technology on a more global scale, was also recognised by the United Nations. In 1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued a Human Development Report, which warned of growing economic, political, social and cultural inequalities on the global level. It identified the structural hurdles that made it difficult for developing countries to benefit from digital technology for the purpose of development and economic growth. In addition, the report also acknowledged the growing “digital divide” between and within countries and warned about the risks of increasing social fragmentation between groups and individuals.<sup>275</sup> The UNDP thereby opened up the international discussion about the “digital divide” and linked it back to overarching and lasting structural inequalities on both the global and national level. Moreover, it contributed to an alternative policy discourse on the information society, which would not focus primarily on the creation of digital infrastructures and the access to technology in order to promote economic growth. Instead, this alternative discourse acknowledged the challenges to which the international

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<sup>273</sup> World Bank, *World Development Report 1998/1999: Knowledge for Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). For the World Bank’s earlier policy discourse on the information society, see Nulens and Van Audenhove, “An Information Society in Africa?”, 457ff.

<sup>274</sup> European Commission, *Building the European Information Society for Us All: Final Policy Report of the High-Level Expert Group* (Luxembourg: European Commission, 1997). The report was strongly influenced by European scholars’ work on innovation and paradigm shifts in economic structures, since three out of the fourteen group members were well-known academics working in the tradition of Schumpeterian economics, namely Luc Soete, Chris Freeman and Manuel Castells. See Van Audenhove, Pohle, and Morganti, “Discourses in International Information Society Policy before the World Summit on the Information Society”.

<sup>275</sup> UNDP, “Human Development Report 1999” (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

community was exposed at the beginning of the digital age and their relation with structural imbalances in the economic, social and cultural sphere.<sup>276</sup>

An international organisation that was ideally placed to develop, advance and promote such an alternative discourse on the information society was UNESCO. Thanks to the organisation's cultural, educational and intellectual mandate and to the history of activities in the field of international communication politics, UNESCO always belonged to those international organisations that propagated a more finely tuned vision of the relationship between technology, access to information and social change. Despite its varied activities—from its efforts related to the Free Flow of Information, Technical Assistance programmes and the promotion of library and archives in the 1950s-60s, through its involvement in the debate about a New World Information and Communication Order, the early promotion of informatics and scientific databases in the 1970s-80s, to the priority given to the development of communication in the early 1990s— UNESCO had always maintained a perspective that did not privilege technology or economic concerns over all other issues. Thus, when confronted with the emergence of the Internet as a new and all-encompassing mass medium and the spread of digital technology in all spheres of social and human life, the organisation was once more confronted with the task of developing a policy position that would account for its particular mandate. But even more importantly, this position needed to be acceptable for all parts of its member states community, including developing countries that were primarily concerned with problems of access and financing as well as the more developed countries, which often set very different priorities. Therefore, the organisation needed to prevent these different positions and interests from resulting in a confrontation between its member states like the one experienced during the NWICO debate. By unnecessarily politicising the debate, such a confrontation would render every consensus on a common policy position more difficult, if not impossible, and would thereby compromise UNESCO's effort to promote an alternative vision of an information society within the international community.

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<sup>276</sup> Van Audenhove et al., "Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy", 14.

## Chapter conclusion

At the beginning of the new century, the idea of developing a common vision of the information society was a priority not only for UNESCO. Nearly 40 years after the first theories on the information society emerged in Japan, 30 years after American theorists started to reflect on the changes triggered by the growth of the information-based economy, and nearly 10 years after the debates on information highways reached the international level, the United Nations decided to host a global summit to discuss these developments. During its 90<sup>th</sup> session in 2001, the UN General Assembly recommended the organisation of the World Summit on the Information Society<sup>277</sup> and mandated ITU, which had proposed the event in 1998, to prepare it.<sup>278</sup> Besides ITU, UNESCO was equally involved in the preparation and organisation of the event, yet with a less prominent role. While UNESCO had initially competed with ITU for the role of the summit's main organiser, it eventually only served as one of the contributors and, consequently, had much less visible influence on the summit's agenda and outcome.

Taking place in two phases, in Geneva in 2003, and in Tunis in 2005, WSIS has often been described as a key event in global communication governance. Over its entire duration, including its various preparatory conferences, it brought together several thousand participants from more than 170 countries to define a common vision of an information society and to find an international answer to the “digital divide”. With regard to this second objective, the summit was originally planned as a development conference that would offer the opportunity to jointly discuss the new global challenges arising from the technological convergence and globalisation, and to agree on sustainable solutions that would address socio-economic inequalities by spreading Internet access in the developing world. But under the auspices of ITU, the summit was dominated by an exorbitant technological positivism and a strong focus on commercial and governance aspects of the Internet. Towards the end of the summit, the controversial discussions

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<sup>277</sup> The WSIS has been followed by an infinite amount of scholarly work. This conclusion therefore avoids giving another account of the event. For details about the process and its outcome, see, among many others, Wolfgang Kleinwächter and Daniel Stauffacher, eds., *The World Summit of the Information Society. Moving from the Past into the Future*, UN ICT Taskforce Series 8 (New York: UN ICT Taskforce, 2005); Marc Raboy, “The World Summit on the Information Society and Its Legacy for Global Governance”, *Gazette* 66, no. 3-4 (6 January 2004): 225-32; Séan Ó Siochrú, “Will the Real WSIS Please Stand Up?: The Historic Encounter of the ‘Information Society’ and the ‘Communication Society’”, *Gazette* 66, no. 3-4 (1 June 2004): 203-24.

<sup>278</sup> The WSIS had been proposed by ITU through its Resolution 73 of the Plenipotentiary Conference, Minneapolis, in 1998. But in 1996 already, UNESCO had discussed the possibility of hosting a world conference that would discuss the increasing role of ICTs for development. But for a number of reasons, which are discussed in more detail in Part III of this thesis, the plan of the conference was continuously postponed and finally suspended in order to give way to the larger UN world summit.

about Internet Governance and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders within its context had taken primacy over other, more social, cultural or human rights-oriented issues.<sup>279</sup> This focus is also reflected in the final outcome documents of WSIS<sup>280</sup>, which were often criticised for essentially meeting the expectations of the developed world, including its strong IT economy, and for not representing the multitude of issues addressed during the summit's long and heated debates.<sup>281</sup> As such, they can be considered a continuation of strong, techno-deterministic policy discourse on the information society, which was introduced primarily by the United States' policy regarding the National Information Infrastructures and was subsequently taken over by most developed countries and many international organisations. Moreover, the general focus of the WSIS outcome can even be linked back to the theoretical reflections that had emerged during the 1960s and 70s and related the progress towards an information society to socio-economic growth and development only. Although WSIS was originally planned as a development conference that should find common solutions to bridge the "Digital Divide", none of the measures proposed by its outcome documents tackled the structural inequalities, which are at the very heart of a globally networked information society.

Despite its biased outcome, WSIS is also known for being the first UN summit to explicitly include both governmental representatives and actors from the business sector and the civil society. And even though the inclusion of non-state actors did not go as far as many had hoped for, the entire WSIS process —from the first preparatory conference in 2001 until its conclusion in 2005— was marked by a continuous and active presence of civil society actors, in particular NGOs, municipalities, parliamentarians and researchers.<sup>282</sup> Yet, while discussions took place in a multi-stakeholder format and allowed

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<sup>279</sup> Katharine Sarikakis and Daya Kishan Thussu, eds., *Ideologies of the Internet* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>280</sup> All WSIS outcome documents are available on the ITU website: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/> (last accessed 25 July 2015).

<sup>281</sup> For a discursive analysis of the WSIS outcome, see Claudia Padovani, "Debating Communication Imbalances from the MacBride Report to the World Summit on the Information Society: An Analysis of a Changing Discourse", *Global Media and Communication* 1, no. 3 (1 December 2005): 316-38.

<sup>282</sup> Just as WSIS itself, also the role of civil society during the summit has been assessed by an important number of scholars, for example Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier, "The Unbearable Lightness of Full Participation in a Global Context. WSIS and Civil Society Participation", in *Towards a Sustainable Information Society: Deconstructing WSIS*, ed. Jan Servaes and Nico Carpentier (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2005), 17-55; Divina Frau-Meigs, "Civil Society and the Amplification of Media Governance, during WSIS and beyond", in *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics – Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides*, ed. Divina Frau-Meigs et al. (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), 199-224; Hintz, *Civil Society Media and Global Governance*; Marc Raboy, Normand Landry, and Jeremy Shtern, *Digital Solidarities, Communication Policy and Multi-Stakeholder Global Governance: The Legacy of the World Summit on the Information Society* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 2010); Séan Ó Siochrú, "Civil Society Participation in the WSIS Process: Promises and Reality", *Continuum* 18, no. 3 (1 September 2004): 330-44.

for exchanges between state and non-state actors, the final decision-making remained within the hands of governments as only their representatives held the right to vote on the official outcome documents. In response to this, civil society eventually put forward an alternative final statement in which it addressed problems other than those of a purely economic and governance-oriented nature and called for more radical structural solutions to global inequalities.<sup>283</sup> The declaration addressed the same issues as the official outcome documents but from a different perspective since it also focused on the social consequences and possible threats of the information society. Thus, in some way, it raised questions and concerns that were already the basis of the claims behind the New World Information and Communication Order in the 1970s and 80s, this time related to digital information. The communication scholar Seán Ó Siochrú critically summarised the historical evolution of the two discourses that came out of WSIS:

“In a sense, there were two World Summits on the Information Society. [...] One was the summit on information, telecommunication, the internet, the ‘digital’ divide, and ultimately the neo-liberal model of development, exposing its limits even as is strained to plead its relevance. The other was the summit on a knowledge and communication society, full of contradictions, ideas still in formation, but nevertheless beginning to perceive new potentials and possibilities.”<sup>284</sup>

According to the same author, many civil society participants believed that the discrepancy between these two discourses would have been less striking if UNESCO had been the main organiser of WSIS, rather than ITU. Not only was UNESCO more sensitive to cultural and communication concerns, but due to its longstanding relationships with professional communities and NGOs, the organisation also had more experience in involving civil society and scholars in their decision-making procedures.<sup>285</sup> This belief is certainly based on the understanding that UNESCO’s own policy discourse on the information society differed significantly from the one promoted by ITU and by other international organisations involved in WSIS. However there has not been any detailed study to date that would analyse UNESCO’s position with regard to digital technology and its social consequences prior to WSIS. Neither had there been any attempt to assess how UNESCO —as one particular actor in global communication governance— has developed such an alternative discourse and how it was influenced in its search for a position by the professional communities and other civil society actors

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<sup>283</sup> For this final civil society statement, with the telling title “Much more could have been achieved”, see <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/contributions/co13.pdf> (last accessed 23 July 2015).

<sup>284</sup> Siochrú, “Will the Real WSIS Please Stand Up?”, 203.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.



that it traditionally works with. The empirical work of this thesis aims to close this gap in research. It therefore focuses on the period of the 1990s and early 2000s, until the first phase of the World Summit, as it was in this particular period that UNESCO, like all other actors involved in communication policy-making, had to formulate a convincing policy discourse on the information society and the increasing importance of the Internet for all spheres of human and social life.

## **Conclusion**

This introductory part of the thesis served to present the institutional, historical and thematic background relevant to the emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society. To this end, it introduced those aspects of the organisation's history, of its tasks as a specialised agency of the United Nations, and of its involvement in international debates on communication and information that help to better understand under which conditions and in which context UNESCO set out to search for a convincing policy position on the societal challenges triggered by the pervasiveness of digital technology. This position needed to account for the particular mandate that UNESCO holds as the intellectual and cultural organisation of the UN system; in addition, it also had to consider the sensitivities of member states so as to avoid a repetition of the tensions and conflicts that had followed UNESCO's previous involvement in debates about global information issues.

Furthermore, since the creation of policy discourse in an international environment never takes place in isolation, particularly within an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO, this first part of the thesis also introduced the thematic context of UNESCO's response to the information society. Influenced by the national policy discourses on information highways and the international debates on the global dimension of digital networks and their societal consequences, UNESCO was only one amongst many international organisations to deal with these questions during the 1990s. However, at the margin of the techno-deterministic policy discourse that dominated many policy initiatives at both the nation and international level, it appeared that UNESCO was one of the few actors which developed an alternative perspective that did not strive exclusively for socio-economic progress based on the usage of digital information technology. Instead, this alternative policy discourse also acknowledged the challenges to which the international

community was exposed, and emphasised their linkages to structural imbalances in the economic, social and cultural sphere, which are not easily overcome through an increase in access to digital technology.

The analysis of how UNESCO developed such an alternative policy discourse on the information society is the focus of the empirical research of this thesis. It would therefore be inadequate to explain UNESCO's perspective solely by reference to its intellectual mandate, which necessarily renders its perspective different from organisations with a more technical or economy-focused mission. Nevertheless, the unique mandate of UNESCO, in combination with its particularly close relationship with professional and academic experts, was certainly one of the many influential factors. Based on the ambition to foster the open exchange of ideas and knowledge, UNESCO allows for consultation with and input by the professional communities related to the organisation's fields of mandate at all levels of its organisational structure. This renders UNESCO's policy processes exceptionally open to intellectual debates and to the discursive power of new ideas put forward by experts and practitioners, and not merely those of professional policy-makers.

At the same time, UNESCO's openness to intellectual debates about ideas, values and norms renders the organisation susceptible to ideological conflicts and to the politicisation of debates. This tendency towards politicisation, which is an inherent part of UNESCO's constitutional set up and mandate, is most clearly visible in UNESCO's activities with regard to communication and information. As such, the vast realm of communication and information issues was not only the last of UNESCO's fields of competence to be added to the organisation's constitution, but was also always the most widely contested.

In order to pave the way for an understanding of how the politicised debates on communication and information issues that UNESCO experienced during the first 45 years of existence impacted the organisation's policy response to the information society, this introductory part of the thesis retraced their history. To this end, it described UNESCO's past activities related to communication, information and informatics as three independent realms that each underwent a different, though similar evolution. Despite their differences, it was possible to identify some common threads that characterised the first decades of UNESCO's information-related activities and programmes: First of all, in all three realms of activity, UNESCO regularly faced the difficulty of having to find a balance between member states in favour of strong regulation and those who refused any governmental intervention in the field of media and information. This controversy led to

the progressive politicisation of all related debates and, hence, affected the political level of the organisation's information programmes. Secondly, the discursive level of all of UNESCO's three programme realms related to communication, information and informatics was marked by the discrepancy between the perception of information as a resource and the perception of information as a commodity. These fundamentally different understandings led to different priorities that member states and other policy actors attributed to different objectives and, hence, added to the conflicts and tensions on the political level. Thirdly, in all three realms, UNESCO tried to overcome the conflicts arising from differences on the political and discursive level through changes on the institutional level. In each case, this consisted in the introduction of a development approach, as well as a shift of attention from the structural to the contextual and individual level of communication and information usage. As such, when UNESCO set out to develop a coherent policy approach that would account for the technological convergence and the increasing digitalisation of society, it was faced with a number of challenges. On the one hand, it had to partially merge its three realms of information-related activities in order to develop a more comprehensive and adequate institutional form for its new approach. On the other hand, it also needed to try to finally leave behind the politicised and conflict-laden debates of the past and to start afresh by identifying ideas, concepts and narratives which all its member states could ascribe to. In fact, what was needed was a

“strategy [...] designed to enable UNESCO to play its moral and intellectual role vis-à-vis the emerging Information Society, taking account of the educational, scientific and cultural needs of all nations and individuals and promoting a genuine symbiosis of cultures based on mutual respect and enrichment”.<sup>286</sup>

However, as the rest of this thesis shows, the search for this strategy turned out to be more difficult than many had wished for. The difficulties on the discursive, political and institutional level that UNESCO had encountered during the evolution of its three information-related realms of activities continued to affect UNESCO's policy-making and all actors involved in it in the period between NWICO and WSIS and, hence, in the period under scrutiny in this thesis.

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<sup>286</sup> UNESCO, “UNESCO and an Information Society for all. A position paper”, CII-96/WS/4, May 1996 (UNESDOC). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.



# PART II:

## Epistemological, conceptual and methodological approach

### Introduction

“As politicians know only too well but social scientists too often forget, public policy is made of language. Whether in written or oral form, argument is central in all stages of the policy process.”<sup>1</sup>

With these words, the political economist Giandomenico Majone was one of the first scholars of political sciences to explicitly formulate the importance of language for public policy analysis. He floated the idea that policy-making was never purely a question of simply finding solutions to policy problems by following formal techniques or scientific data analysis. He suggested that in order to bring people around to their position, policy actors had to persuade them by using clear and relevant arguments instead.

Nowadays, these insights can be considered common sense. As a result of the “linguistic turn” initiated by philosophers in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, analysing the role of language, discourse, narrative structures and rhetorical tools is today an essential part of most social sciences, including communication studies and policy research. Yet, most discourse-oriented policy studies focus on the final policy texts as the outcome of policy-making processes and ignore the processes that lead to this outcome.

In contrast to this prevalent focus on final policy texts, such outcomes are the fruit of very heated discussions prior to their elaboration and these early debates eventually bear on the resulting proposals. Hence, conducting discourse analysis of only final policy texts cannot be sufficient to assess how language, ideas and practices of policy actors influence the outcome. But the theoretical and empirical consideration of these elements at different moments of policy planning and decision-making processes still lags behind. For

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<sup>1</sup> Giandomenico Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1989), 1.

this reason, it is one of the aims of this thesis, and this chapter in particular, to propose conceptual and methodological tools for the possibility of conducting a discourse-oriented analysis, which pays attention to the processes of policy-making — and this in the particular settings of an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO where such processes are phased and fundamental to diplomatic outcomes.

Up to now, the research on international communication policies, in particular those regarding digital technology and the Internet, has not often been connected to methodological reflections on discourse. The idea of “policy as discourse”, in particular, has remained undertheorised in communication studies and related fields until now. Among the few exceptions, the work of Veva Leye stands out, which is close to this thesis, both in terms of methodology and theme.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on UNESCO’s discourse on ICT for Development (ICT4D), Leye analysed the organisation’s communication policies from a methodological perspective that she describes as a “fruitful alternative to analyses of policy making as the outcome of a rational decision-making process”.<sup>3</sup> However, even though her work avoided remaining on a descriptive level that takes UNESCO’s policy decision for granted, she analysed the organisation’s discourse only as reflected in final policy texts; consequently, it does not engage in an examination of the policy-making processes leading to the specific discourse.

A few other discourse-inspired studies analyse policy debates on international communications and the Internet instead of assessing final policy documents. In most of these studies, the concept of “policy debate” does not simply refer to discussions that take place in formal or informal meetings among various policy actors. Instead, the authors understand “debate” in a larger sense, also including alternative proposals and differing opinions uttered in statements, letters or email exchanges, working groups, mailing lists and all other expressions that contribute to shaping a policy issue. Three recent examples that apply an explicit focus on policy debates are Dmitry Epstein’s

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<sup>2</sup> Veva Leye, “UNESCO’s Policy on International Communication: A Discursive Analysis of UNESCO and Communication (1975-2005)”, PhD thesis in Communication Studies, Universiteit Gent, 2009; Veva Leye, “UNESCO’s Communication Policies as Discourse: How Change, Human Development and Knowledge Relate to Communication”; Veva Leye, “UNESCO’s Road toward Knowledge Societies”, *Javnost – The Public* 14, no. 4 (2007): 73-88; Veva Leye, “UNESCO, ICT Corporations and the Passion of ICT for Development: Modernization Resurrected”, *Media, Culture & Society* 29, no. 6 (1 November 2007): 972-93.

<sup>3</sup> Leye, “UNESCO’s Policy on International Communication: A Discursive Analysis of UNESCO and Communication (1975-2005)”, 31. Leye’s doctoral dissertation was supported by the same research grant as this thesis, the doctoral fellowship of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). Her work conceptually inspired this research but eventually differs with regard to the concrete methodological approach and its empirical focus, as it analyses UNESCO’s discourse on ICT4D instead of the broader issue of the information society.

discourse analytical research on the language applied in Internet governance debates<sup>4</sup>, Sandra Braman’s analysis of the interaction of technical and legal decision-making for the Internet<sup>5</sup> and Divina Frau-Meigs’ analysis of the French and English vocabulary used during the WSIS debates<sup>6</sup>. These authors focus on discussion processes and the vocabulary applied in spoken and written debates as key to the understanding of their outcomes. Yet, a systematic examination of the methodological and theoretical questions of how to analyse communication policies on both textual and contextual levels, considering both policy debates and their concrete outcome, is still pending. Moreover, no study has yet been conducted that links these kinds of methodological and conceptual reflections to the analysis of discourses on the information society and the societal impact of digital technology.

In order to respond to this methodological challenge, the present thesis is largely inspired by several theoretical strands of social sciences, and their influence on International Relations (IR) theory and policy studies. The first chapter of this part presents the *epistemological and conceptual framework* by introducing these various theoretical strands and discussing their relevance, forces and weaknesses for the thesis’ particular research focus. The conceptual framework is primarily inspired by poststructuralist approaches to policy studies and draws on discourse theory in order to develop the idea of “policy as discourse”. Yet, it goes beyond poststructuralist thinking by questioning the epistemological approach of traditional discourse studies to the role of interests and institutions, without losing the primary focus on discourse and beliefs.

On the basis of these reflections, the second chapter introduces the *methodological and analytical framework* and proposes a combination of Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA) —initiated as Argumentative Policy Analysis (APA) by Frank Fischer and John Forester and further developed by Marteen Hajer— with some tools put forward by Actor-Network Theory (ANT), in particular as defined by Bruno Latour in both his theoretical and empirical work. While the first approach allows for an analysis of

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<sup>4</sup> Dmitry Epstein, “Constructing the Information Society: The Binding Nature of Nonbinding Debates about Internet Governance”, paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Telecommunication Policy Research Conference, Arlington, VA, 2010; Dmitry Epstein, “Manufacturing Internet Policy Language: The Inner Workings of the Discourse Construction at the Internet Governance Forum”, paper presented at TPRC 2011 – Research Conference on Communication, Information and Internet Policy, Arlington, VA, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Sandra Braman, “The Interpenetration of Technical and Legal Decision-Making for the Internet”, *Information, Communication & Society* 13, no. 3 (April 2010): 309-24; Sandra Braman, “Internationalization of the Internet by Design: The First Decade”, *Global Media and Communication* 8, no. 1 (29 April 2012): 27-45.

<sup>6</sup> Divina Frau-Meigs, “Le français du SMSI ou l’entre-jeu des mots”, in *La société de l’information : Glossaire critique*, ed. Catherine Souyri and Commission nationale française pour l’UNESCO (Paris: La Documentation française, 2005), 145-51.

argumentative structures and discursive exchanges during policy debates, the latter is chosen for assessing the social creation of meaning and objects in heterogeneous policy-making environments. Accordingly, their combination makes it possible to look at policy discourse as the outcome of discursive struggles among networks of actors. Moreover, another empirical category is added, consisting in those contextual factors that are necessary for understanding the policy discourse.

Finally, the last chapter introduces the *methodological set-up* of this thesis by outlining the way in which the two different methodological approaches, ANT and ADA, were combined on the empirical level. In addition, it introduces the concrete empirical research steps that were followed in order to assess which ideas about an information society were developed during the period under scrutiny and, in particular, how certain ideas came to be adopted as the dominant thinking in an international policy-making body like UNESCO. Lastly, it also discusses the empirical and methodological difficulties encountered during the research.

## **1. Epistemological and conceptual approach**

The epistemological and conceptual reflections underlying this thesis start from poststructuralist approaches to International Relations and policy studies and their interest for analysing the historical, cultural, social and linguistic practices through which people conceive, construct and constitute the international world. Therefore, this chapter introduces the poststructuralism-inspired ways for doing this by looking at the discursive function of language and the creation of reality and meaning through discursive and non-discursive interaction in international settings, away from the linear and rational choices of structuralist discourse. In order to link this understanding to the research interest of this thesis, the chapter discusses the common understandings of “discourse” prevalent in IR and policy studies and analyses how they can be applied in order to frame “policy” as “discourse”. Lastly, it broadens the understanding of policy discourse underlying this thesis by discussing the role that agency and institutions play for policy-making. Inspired by the theoretical approach of discursive institutionalism, it moves the epistemological framework beyond a purely poststructuralist understanding by acknowledging the existence of interests and institutions and their crucial role for the creation of policy



discourse. The chapter thereby provides the conceptual frame for the methodological approach used for the analysis of UNESCO's policy response to the information society.

## 1.1 Poststructuralist approach to International Relations

While the ideas of postmodernism and poststructuralism informed most fields of social theory during the late 1960s, they did not enter the field of International Relations theory until the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> Since then, a significant number of IR scholars have started to use approaches that can be categorised as either postmodernist or poststructuralist, even though it is difficult to establish a strict differentiation between the two categories.<sup>8</sup> This is due to the fact that both postmodernism and poststructuralism elude the definition and form of a clear philosophical or epistemological movement. Postmodernism, on the one hand, can be described as a complex set of methods, practices and perspectives that approach rather traditional questions in a non-traditional way by regarding perceived realities as purely social constructs. Poststructuralism, on the other hand, can be considered as one specific postmodernist approach, which differs from other postmodernist streams by renouncing the fundamental structuralist belief that human nature can be understood by way of language as a structure mediating between the real world and our ideas.

Poststructuralist thinking is generally accredited to a series of French intellectuals and writers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Bruno Latour, Michel Callon or the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.<sup>9</sup> Since their ideas essentially inspired the epistemological reflections presented in this chapter, most concepts and ideas are referred to as poststructuralist, although some of them could more generally be regarded as postmodernist thinking. At the same time, the chapter also discusses how the conceptual

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<sup>7</sup> Robert H. Jackson and Georg Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 294.

<sup>8</sup> Jenny Edkins, "Poststructuralism", in *International Relations Theory for the Twenty-First Century: An Introduction*, ed. Martin Griffiths (London; New York: Routledge, 2007): 88; 98. For an overview on different topics of IR that had been dealt with from an poststructuralist or postmodernist perspective, see *ibid.*, 88; and Jim George, *Discourses of Global Politics: A Critical (Re)introduction to International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994), 192ff.

<sup>9</sup> It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to give a comprehensive introduction to poststructuralist thinkers and their key concepts. Only few elements are relevant for the type of analysis conducted and are therefore introduced in this chapter. For more details on poststructuralist thinking, see for instance Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988); Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

approach of the thesis goes beyond both postmodernist and poststructuralist conceptualisations of problems and of the world in general.

What characterises theories and approaches in IR and related fields as part of poststructuralism is their common objective of challenging dominant thinking about world politics. Following the postmodernist critique of scientific positivism and modernism, many critical thinkers in IR are deeply sceptical about the modern idea that there can be such a thing as objective knowledge about social phenomena. Hence, they question the existence of objective truth and objective reality as well as the existence of empirical-based, verifiable knowledge that could offer valuable insight into the ultimate truth about reality. Both notions of truth and reality are regarded as “intellectual illusions” and “subjective beliefs”.<sup>10</sup>

As a logical consequence, poststructuralist approaches to world politics problematise the ambition of IR scholars to formulate “grand theories”. Instead of viewing the world through the lenses of large theoretical constructions that explain all social phenomena, they prefer to study, on a micro level, why it is that—in specific historic moments and circumstances— certain phenomena are interpreted in the way that they are. The development of theories is part of this interpretation and therefore needs to be considered as a social construction rather than as an overarching explanatory framework:

“Formulating grand theory is seen as a social practice among other social practices: theories on how the world works are regarded as part of the world, not detached from it, and are studied by poststructuralists alongside other practices.”<sup>11</sup>

In poststructuralist thinking, all-embracing theoretical constructions—such as liberalism or realism—are simply “narratives” or even “meta-narratives” that try to capture the interrelation of societal, political, economic and cultural phenomena from a specific perspective. However, since poststructuralists consider that objective knowledge about an independently existing reality is not possible, they do not accept the idea of a neutral standpoint from which scholars can observe the world’s phenomena as outsiders. In their opinion, observations are never neutral and all theoretical claims about the world are inescapably and intrinsically subjective.

Drawing on these assumptions, the epistemological and conceptual framework of this thesis follows poststructuralist contributions to IR theory in their ambition to

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<sup>10</sup> Jackson and Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, 295.

<sup>11</sup> Edkins, “Poststructuralism”, 88.

“reconceptualize the ‘reality’ of International Relations”.<sup>12</sup> The thesis therefore explores the processes and practices that produce perceptions of reality and, thereby, have considerable social and political impact, for instance by influencing the perception of problems that underlie international policies about the information society.

In addition, the conceptual approach of this thesis also follows the fundamental belief of poststructuralism that “people conceive, construct and constitute the worlds in which they live, including the international world, which is an entirely human arrangement”.<sup>13</sup> Analysing the historical, cultural, social and linguistic practices through which people conceive the world is consequently a crucial step towards an understanding of this arrangement. The most common poststructuralism-inspired way to do this is to look at the discursive function of the language used to describe certain phenomena. But unlike structuralism, which draws its conclusions mainly from linguistic analyses and which searches for a deeper understanding of the true meaning within or behind a text, poststructuralists see the production of meaning in the interaction of text, its producer and its receiver.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it is not only the language itself, but also context and all involved actors as well as their practices that need to be part of the analysis.

The analysis of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society starts from this poststructuralism-inspired understanding of discourse and the creation of reality and meaning through discursive and non-discursive interaction in an international setting. However, the epistemological approach of this thesis differs from more strictly poststructuralist studies on one important point: it does not go as far as to negate that reality exists independently from human perception. In fact, there is a constant suspicion by scholars working on poststructuralism that Derrida’s acclamation “il n’y a pas de hors-texte” —often misleadingly translated as “there is nothing outside the text”— could be misinterpreted as a complete denial of a material world existing independently from human perception.<sup>15</sup> The discourse theorists Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe tried to counter this suspicion with their frequently quoted interpretation that

“the fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse *has nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly

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<sup>12</sup> George, *Discourses of Global Politics*, 191.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson and Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, 292.

<sup>14</sup> Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, 3. Structuralism mainly draws on the ideas of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who considered language as the most important instrument through which human construct their perception. For Saussure language constitutes a formal system of interconnected units, which needs to be analysed separately from the act of speaking Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (Paris: Payot, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1967), 227.

exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God’ depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence [emphasis in original]”.<sup>16</sup>

The thesis’ understanding of the relationship between reality and discourse is, therefore, based on the rationale that things do exist “out there”. However, it is the human perception of these things and of their relationship, as well as non-linear and non-rational choices that eventually lead to the creation of meaning and to the production of what is conceived as reality.

## **1.2 Creation of discourse and meaning in IR and policy studies**

Based on the outlined epistemological understanding, the aim of this thesis is to understand how UNESCO —as an actor in the network of international relations— constructs a certain perception and vision of an “information society” and of the role of information and knowledge for society over a long period of time and through different kinds of interactions. As a second step, the objective is to analyse how this vision influenced the organisation’s policy-making in the field of information and communication as well as its general perception of political, economic, social and cultural phenomena in a world where the creation, distribution, use and manipulation of information plays an increasingly important role.

The empirical and analytical research, therefore, consists in a combination of two different kinds of assessment: on the one hand, it examines the production of discourse; on the other hand, it analyses the production of meaning through discourse. These two different production processes, which are intrinsically interconnected, take place in the particular setting of an intergovernmental organisation that is part of the United Nations. Because it is a public institution in charge of international policy-making, UNESCO’s activities are not only interesting from an IR perspective but also for policy studies.

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<sup>16</sup> Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), 108.

The different strands of poststructuralist approaches in IR and policy studies are united by a common belief in the significance of ideas or language for perception. In order to highlight the inclusion of meaning-making practices, most scholars prefer to refer to “discourse” instead of “language”. They thereby aim to move beyond purely focusing on the relationship between linguistic utterances and the objects they refer to, in order to also include contextual aspects of discourse.<sup>17</sup> However, it is important to emphasise that the term “discourse” does not refer to a speech or another kind of formal spoken text, which in UN terminology is generally referred to as an “address” or “statement”. Thus, studies consisting in the rhetorical assessment of diplomatic discourse in the sense of formal talks do not analyse “discourse” since they do not assess the ideas behind the oral and written texts but the semantic aspects of spoken and written text.<sup>18</sup>

But apart from this distinction, there seem to be no common agreements in the field of IR and policy studies about the best ways to study discourse and the production of meaning. In addition, despite the high number of scholarly texts on discourse theory and of discourse theory-inspired empirical studies in political sciences or policy research, the political theorists Howarth and Torfing further note a lack of research connecting conceptual and empirical studies via the reflection on methodological questions.<sup>19</sup>

Trying to overcome this lack of methodological reflection, the IR scholar Jennifer Milliken assessed a large number of discourse analytical studies from her own and related academic fields. She notes a shared commitment to at least three distinguishable sets of theoretical claims:<sup>20</sup>

First of all, Milliken discovers a common understanding of discourse as “*structures of signification* which construct social realities”, indicating an underlying “*constructivist understanding of meaning* [emphasis added]”.<sup>21</sup> Decision-makers construct a certain idea of reality by using signs to describe and contextualise phenomena; these signs might consist in language, but might also take other forms, such as images, numbers or gestures. Moreover, by placing things in particular relationships to each other, a particular “system

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<sup>17</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, “Textualizing Global Politics”, in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Toronto, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 11.

<sup>18</sup> This kind of rhetorical study, analysing the diplomatic language in the particular context of the UN, is for instant done by the communication scholars Ray T. Donahue and Michael H. Prosser, *Diplomatic Discourse International Conflict at the United Nations – Addresses and Analysis* (Greenwich; London: Ablex Publishing, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> David R. Howarth and Jacob Torfing, eds., *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance* (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods”, *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1 June, 1999): 226; 228.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

of signification” is created, attributing meaning to the various subjects and objects that are part of it. Discourse studies based on this understanding commonly take on a relationalist, contextual and, in a certain way, historical view of the creation of meaning. They are based on the belief that things and ideas can only be construed, understood and interpreted in their relation to others and within a particular context.<sup>22</sup>

Applied to the topic of this thesis, this means that the concept of “information society” or “post-industrial society” can only be understandable in relation to earlier concepts such as “agricultural” or “industrial society” and in due consideration of the technological, historical, socio-economic and political context. Accordingly, the commitment to one of these concepts has consequences for the use, understanding and interpretation of all related concepts and terms, such as “information”, “work”, “participation”, “global”, and many others.

In essence, according to this first set of theoretical claims, discourses serve as sorts of “background capacities”<sup>23</sup> that enable people to identify phenomena defined by the discourse and to intuitively attribute certain characteristics to them. This way, discourses also structure our perception as they allow for objects and ideas to be related to one another.<sup>24</sup>

Following Milliken, a second theoretical commitment in discourse analytical IR studies consists in understanding *discourse as being productive or reproductive* of what is defined by the discourse itself. Instead of only defining phenomena of the real world, through these definitions a particular discourse also *produces* a certain world-view and excludes other, alternative interpretations. In return, the privileged world-view facilitates the production of meanings that are in line with the initial discourse, and thus *reproduces* it.

In addition, based on the preferred world-view, a particular discourse not only privileges some actions as “knowledgeable practices” and, hence, as commonly accepted behaviour; it also influences the perception of who is authorised to speak or act with regard to particular subjects and, in this way, shapes the social world of other people.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Milliken states that:

“discourses are understood to work to define and to enable, and also to silence and to exclude, for example, by limiting and restricting authorities and experts to some groups, but not others, endorsing a certain common sense, but making

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<sup>22</sup> Howarth and Torfing, *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations”, 231.

<sup>24</sup> Shapiro, “Textualizing Global Politics”, 10f.

<sup>25</sup> Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations”, 236.

other modes of categorizing and judging meaningless, impracticable, inadequate or otherwise disqualified”.<sup>26</sup>

Following this logic, discourses can enable governments or international organisations to establish a common sense of what is perceived as reality or truth. This way, they legitimise certain policies or actions while, at the same time, they dismiss other plausible suggestions as unworkable or undesirable.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, following this understanding, “a ‘discourse’ is not just a set of words, it is a set of rules about what you can and cannot say.”<sup>28</sup>

Yet, the dominance of a certain discourse within the political and public awareness is never a stable situation; it requires work to be articulated and constantly confirmed. The discourse has to be operationalised in order to be able to produce and reproduce the meaning of things and a common sense. Therefore, the third common commitment within discourse-inspired IR research, as identified by Milliken, consists in the belief that *dominating discourses and production of their meaning are connected to implementing practices* trying to stabilise their general acceptance.<sup>29</sup> Even though policy implementation is not part of the research conducted in this thesis, the “play of practice” —as Milliken calls it<sup>30</sup>— is relevant for its underlying conceptual assumptions. Indeed, in the context of policy-making, dominant discourses cannot only be operationalised by the production of certain policy practices. By influencing organisational and institutional practices, they also limit the policy options that policy-makers find appropriate and, by doing so, silence alternative discourses.

At the same time, these dominant discourses reflect externalities such as asymmetries in power and information, which —in the case of an intergovernmental organisation as UNESCO— result from geopolitical, socio-economic imbalances and the changing international landscape at the end of the Cold War and the beginning of technology-driven globalisation. Thus, the dominance of one discourse over another and the resulting

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 236f.

<sup>28</sup> Des Gasper and Raymond Apthorpe, “Introduction: Discourse Analysis and Policy Discourse”, *European Journal of Development Research* 8, no. 1 (1996): 4; Michele Barrett, “Discoursing with Intent”, *Times Higher Educational Supplement* (12 May 1995), <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/discoursing-with-intent/98249.article?storyCode=98249&sectioncode=26> (last accessed 10 May 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Milliken, “The Study of Discourse in International Relations”, 230.

<sup>30</sup> For this expression, Milliken draws on Richard Ashley, “Living on Border Lines: Man, Poststructuralism and War”, in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Toronto, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 259-323. See also Roxanne Lynn Doty, “Aporia: A Critical Exploration of the Agent-Structure Problematique in International Relations Theory”, *European Journal of International Relations* 3, no. 3 (9 January 1997): 365-92.

policy options are always also a reflection of the power relations between the actors involved in the creation of the discourse.

### 1.3 Conceptualising policy as discourse

The conceptualisation of “discourse” that underlies this thesis is based on the three theoretical claims identified by Milliken for the field of IR. Summarising these claims, discourse is understood as an *ensemble of ideas, concepts, frames and definitions that attributes meaning to objects and phenomena of the real world and, by doing so, creates and reproduces a certain world-view, which it searches to stabilise as common sense*.<sup>31</sup>

Instead of using this interpretation of the meaning of “discourse” as a definition, it should be understood as an attempt at clarification. In fact, providing a static definition of “discourse” would replicate the implicit logic that discourse theory commonly tries to disclose: since specifying the meaning of terms, problems or concepts in the abstract determines their limits for the concrete usage, any strict definition of terms and concepts are avoided in this thesis.<sup>32</sup>

However, even without giving a definition that would limit and determine the term’s usage in this thesis, the particular role of discourse for the field of public policy-making in an international setting needs further clarification before the various ways of producing meaning in the process of policy planning can be scrutinised. For this purpose, what, is understood in this thesis by “policy”, “policy-making” and “policy discourse” should be clarified. Yet, as for “discourse”, the conceptualisations of these terms and all other clarification are not to be understood as stable definitions that exclude alternative perspectives; instead, they simply serve as point of reference for the following considerations.

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<sup>31</sup> This understanding is an extension of the basic definition given in Maarten Hajer, “Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain”, in *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, ed. Frank Fischer and John Forester (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1993), 45. For an overview on the different understandings of the term “discourse” in relation to policy and policy-making, see Gasper and Apthorpe, “Introduction”, 2ff.

<sup>32</sup> Carol Bacchi, “Policy as Discourse: What Does It Mean? Where Does It Get Us?”, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 21, no. 1 (April 2000): 46. Referring to the work of Paul Bové, Bacchi confirms that the attempt to define “discourse” would “contradict the logic of the structure of thought in which the term ‘discourse’ now has a newly powerful critical function” since the meaning-making capacity of discourse delineates what is commonly accepted as knowledge. See also Paul Bové, “Discourse”, in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 53.



In a general manner, policy can be understood as a “stable, purposive course of actions followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”.<sup>33</sup> There are disagreements in policy studies about the condition of “purposiveness” of all policy decisions since it is possible that some unintended elements and formulations are included in policy texts.<sup>34</sup> Yet, this understanding of “policy” makes it clear that decision-making on and implementation of policies involve purposive processes. At the same time, it also explicitly emphasises that policies are not only goal-oriented but also imply action, not only the proposition of action. Moreover, this understanding suggests that the concept of “policy” goes beyond a single decision by governments or other authorised policy-makers since it involves a guiding principle. In the form of a commonly accepted interpretation of the issues at stake, this guiding principle leads to a “course of actions” and thus guarantees a certain degree of continuity with regard to both policy decision and their implementation.<sup>35</sup>

The logical consequence of this understanding of “policy” is that all policy-making is influenced by the commonly accepted interpretation of problems and the guiding principles already agreed on. Hence, much more than facts and scientific evidence, it is often a dominant world-view that eventually bears on the general perspective of policy proposals. In order to emphasise this dependence from shared interpretations and conceptualisations, two American political analysts, Frank Fischer and John Forester, describe policy-making as

“a constant *discursive* struggle over the criteria of social classification, the boundaries of problem categories, the intersubjective interpretation of common experiences, the conceptual framing of problems, and the definition of ideas that guide the ways people create the shared meanings which motivate them to act [emphasis in original]”.<sup>36</sup>

By referring to the efforts of finding common frames for policy issues as “discursive struggles”, Fischer and Forester emphasise the importance of language, ideas and interaction for policy-making. For them, the work of a policy analyst does not consist in data analysis and rational decision-making but in the production of “evidence and

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<sup>33</sup> James E. Anderson, *Public Policymaking*, (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003), 2.

<sup>34</sup> See Wayne Parsons, *Public Policy: An Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Policy Analysis* (Cheltenham; Lyme: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 1995), 13.

<sup>35</sup> It cannot be the purpose of this research to define and discuss the concept of policy in more detail. For the different conceptualisations of “policy” and their historical development, see Peter Deleon and Christine R. Martell, “The Policy Sciences: Past, Present, and Future”, in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. B. Guy Peters and Jon Pierre (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006), 31-47.

<sup>36</sup> Frank Fischer and John Forester, eds., *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1993), 2.

arguments”, as Majone had described it some years earlier.<sup>37</sup> In order to be used as “evidence”, available information and data must be embedded within the dominant world-view and, hence, within argumentative structures that give them a certain meaning and link data and information to the conclusion of an analytical study.<sup>38</sup>

Fischer and Forester’s understanding of policy-making was based on Majone’s influential work on the role of language in policy-making, which initiated a series of scholarly reflections on the relationship of facts, truth and belief in policy analysis. Developing Majone’s work further into a loose theory with methodological aspects, Fischer and Forester paved the way for different approaches of policy analysis that can be grouped together under the term Argumentative Policy Analysis. They all share the emphasis on framing and argumentative structures as key components of the policy process.<sup>39</sup> In addition, they are united by the belief that policy-making can never be a value-free technical process. As a matter of fact, unlike traditional policy analysis which is often framed in a neo-positivist epistemology and based on technical assessments and hypothesis testing, APA considers language as the most constitutive element for policy-making. Accordingly, it is the formulation of a concrete problem that eventually shapes the way this issue is defined and addressed by a certain policy.<sup>40</sup> During the policy process, competing formulations of a problem are tested and discussed by analysts and other involved actors in order to structure a policy problem and propose potential solutions. But from the perspective of Argumentative Policy Analysis, the arguments and problem definitions shaped during these debates are not simply rhetorical exercises about the framing of problems and their potential solutions; instead, they are expressions of competing views of the particular policy problem and the world in general.<sup>41</sup> Taking this into consideration, neither Fischer and Forester’s approach to public policy nor other linguistic or textualising approaches can be regarded as an “attempt to reduce social phenomena to various concrete manifestations of language. Rather it is an attempt to analyze the interpretations governing policy thinking.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; 63.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert Gottweis, “Argumentative Policy Analysis”, in *Handbook of Public Policy*, ed. Jon Pierre and B. Guy Peters (London: Sage, 2006), 464.

<sup>40</sup> William N. Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003), 78.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 72, 77.

<sup>42</sup> Michael J. Shapiro, “Representing World Politics: The Sport/War Intertext”, in *International/Intertextual Relations: Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, ed. James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (Toronto, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 71.

There is a clear correlation between this interpretation of policy and policy-making and the poststructuralist understanding of discourse that was introduced earlier: Policy thinking is influenced by the definitions, ideas, notions and frames through which involved actors try to make sense of social, economic or political problems and thereby impact on the outcome of the policy process. Stabilised in official policy texts and through practical implementation, these interpretations of issues become common sense and reproduce themselves by influencing the consideration of other policy issues. Consequently, it is possible to conceptualise *policy discourse as the ensemble of ideas, concepts, frames and definitions that gives meaning to a phenomenon of the real world, structuring it as a concrete policy problem and proposing solutions; by addressing the problem and its potential solutions in policy texts, the world view behind it is stabilised and reproduced as common policy thinking.*

Of course, just like “discourse” and “policy”, also “policy discourse” can be understood in various different ways, although much of the academic literature on the subject avoids concrete clarifications or explicit definitions. The political scientist Carol Bacchi gathered a wide range of different interpretations of the term from the policy discourse literature. Based on this analysis, she suggests that most policy-as-discourse theorists interpret the term in a way that suits their political purpose, for instance, by interpreting policy discourse simply as a means for stabilising existing orders by those who hold power or for fostering change by those who lack it.<sup>43</sup> This thesis tries to avoid this purposive interpretation and, instead, develops an understanding of “policy discourse” that takes different aspects into consideration and gives a more balanced image as a result.

Most importantly, the understanding applied in this thesis does not view the development of policy discourses as an action that could be done by only one actor or a group of actors pursuing the same political purpose. Indeed, only in very rare cases do the ideas, definitions and frames behind final policy texts draw on the meaning-making efforts and discourses of solely one actor; more often, it is a combination of various elements deriving from different, even competing discourses and actors.<sup>44</sup> Policy discourse can thus

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<sup>43</sup> Bacchi, “Policy as Discourse”, 51f. Our reading of empirical studies on policy discourse confirms Bacchi’s observation. “Policy as discourse” approaches have been linked noticeably often to studies of development discourse where the political stance of the writer is often very explicit, see, for instance, Des Gasper, “Analysing Policy Arguments”, *European Journal of Development Research* 8, no. 1 (1996): 36-62; Raymond Apthorpe, “Reading Development Policy and Policy Analysis: On Framing, Naming, Numbering and Coding”, *European Journal of Development Research* 8, no. 1 (1996): 16; Harry Jones, “Policy-Making as Discourse: A Review of Recent Research-to-Policy Literature”, Working paper no 5 (Bonn: IKM Emergent Research Programme and Overseas Development Institute, 2009); Leye, “UNESCO’s Policy on International Communication: A Discursive Analysis of UNESCO and Communication (1975-2005)”.

<sup>44</sup> These actors can be elected representatives, civil servants, officials, experts but also activists and members of civil society, and others, see Vivien A. Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: The

also be seen as “the outcome of *joint productions of meanings among various policy actors* [emphasis added]”.<sup>45</sup>

Sharing the understanding of policy discourse as joint production processes, the IR scholar Vivienne Schmidt distinguishes two basic kinds of policy discourse: the “coordinative discourse” between policy actors and the “communicative discourse” between political actors and the public. While the first one is made up of the ideas, narratives, notions and frames that policy actors exchange during the process of policy construction, the latter is reflected in the presentation of policy ideas by political actors trying to convince the public of the appropriateness and necessity of these ideas.<sup>46</sup> A general understanding of policy discourse covers both of these forms: policy discourse is not only represented in texts and official documents issued by public institutions and reflected in all kind of statements, speeches, debates and other communications on the policy issues in question.<sup>47</sup> In addition, policy discourse emerges from the debates leading up to policy decisions and is, hence, also represented in all different kind of texts and records that result from this process and in the practices of actors involved in it.

Since not all discursive expressions in debates or official texts necessarily need to propose concrete policy actions, the concept of “policy discourse” varies significantly from the concept of “policy”. In fact, it can be carried on unintentionally and continue to be discussed for a long time without being reflected in concrete policy formulations. Thus, although policy discourse is much more than pure rhetoric, it is not the same as the formulation of policies and their implementation; instead, it underlies and influences the formulation of policies. As a consequence, there needs to be a clear distinction between the production of policy discourse on the one hand, and the pure formulation of policy texts on the other hand.<sup>48</sup> Policy discourse is used to shape, justify or alter concrete policy solutions inscribed in texts. The analysis of a policy discourse is hence very different from the interpretation of concrete policy texts and requires a different kind of methodology.

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Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse”, *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (June 2008): 310. This list is however not to be understood as a restriction of the term of “policy actor” since it will in the following be opened up to very different groups of actants.

<sup>45</sup> Véronique Mottier, “From Welfare to Social Exclusion: Eugenic Social Policies and the Swiss National Order”, in *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, ed. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing (Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 256. Mottier refers with this definition to the influential work of Hajer on policy discourse.

<sup>46</sup> Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism”, 310.

<sup>47</sup> Leo Van Audenhove et al., “Discourse and Reality in International Information Society Policy: The Dominant Scenario and Its Application in the Developing World”, *Communicatio* 29, no. 1 (2003): 80.

<sup>48</sup> Gasper and Apthorpe, “Introduction”, 6.

## 1.4 Interests and institutions in the creation of policy discourses

Before moving on to the methodological approach, it is necessary to take a closer look at one more conceptual aspect which is particularly important for defining a framework for the analysis of policy discourse. It is also the aspect in which the epistemological and conceptual approach of this thesis differs most significantly from a purely poststructuralist understanding of discourse. In fact, in contrast to linguistic approaches that deny the existence of a reality that is not filtered and constructed through language and discourse, the approach of this thesis acknowledges the role that institutions as well as actors and their interests play for policy-making, which it looks at from the viewpoint of discourse and the interactive processes of its creation.

The focus on either actors and interests or on institutions or discourses in the study of policy-making has often been framed as fundamental conceptual choices that are mutually exclusive.<sup>49</sup> However, it appears that these different frameworks do share commonalities, which makes it possible to combine them without losing the focus on the discursive creation of meaning in policy-making.

Traditionally, many schools of thought in policy studies and IR considered that the driving force in policy-making is material political economy expressed through the interests of policy actors trying to compete over the allocation of resources and the formulation of regulations. Part of this perspective is that, during policy processes, actors try to gain and maintain power by building alliances and coalitions that can help to protect or advance their particular interests.<sup>50</sup> According to this perspective, policy-making therefore comprises all processes for constructing and reconstructing these alliances and coalitions as well as their interactions, which consist primarily in negotiation and bargaining.<sup>51</sup> Typically, empirical research on agency and interest tries to identify the coalitions and alliances and assess how they are bound together by interests and how they coordinate their activities in order to advance these interests, for instance through advocacy coalitions.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jones, "Policy-Making as Discourse", 12.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> The political economist Harry Jones outlines this agency-focused approach to policy-making in order to analyse the relation of power and knowledge in different analytical frameworks for policy analysis. According to his analysis, this approach considers that "knowledge is largely subordinate to interests in policy processes: different interests compete openly and the more adept and better resourced win, with knowledge used as 'ammunition' in an adversarial system of decision-making, or tactically, as a resource drawn on to bolster decisions or courses of action" (ibid).

<sup>52</sup> Paul A Sabatier and Hank C Jenkins-Smith, *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993).

But instead of viewing this actor-oriented perspective as being opposed to a discourse analytical approach to policy, the perspective can be integrated into the approach, thus providing an interesting additional dimension to the analysis. The idea behind this move is that it is neither interests nor discourses that individually influence policy-making, but rather the interplay of interests and discourses. The attention paid to actors and to their interactions allows for the definition of a conceptual frame for the causal influence that ideas, concepts or narratives—which together form a discourse— exert on policy processes. Discourses do not simply appear, they are always proposed, introduced and promoted by actors who might or might not effectively use them in order to advance their interests. At the same time, political and economic interests are not unswayable characteristics of policy actors but always and necessarily a reflection of more fundamental beliefs and ideas. Thus, when policy discourse is perceived as “the outcome of joint productions of meanings among various policy actors”<sup>53</sup>, its analysis cannot neglect the interplay of ideas, interests and material political economy as well as its impact on the actors involved in the creation of policy discourse:

“[D]iscourse cannot be considered on its own, since it requires agents who articulate and communicate their ideas through discourse in exchanges that may involve discussion, deliberation, negotiation, and contestation.”<sup>54</sup>

Consequently, one way to integrate the consideration of agency and interests in a discourse analytical study is to focus on *how* specific actors carry certain ideas and discourses into policy-processes and use them to convince other actors.<sup>55</sup> Yet, the analysis of these material interests and their origins and interrelations, as well as the question of *why* actors follow these interests, goes beyond a discourse analytical study of policy-making and leads towards a political economy approach, which is not the one chosen in this thesis.

In addition to studies that have an exclusive interest in agency, there is another conceptual approach for policy analysis that does not traditionally include the assessment of discourse or ideas. This approach is based on the idea that no negotiations or bargaining among policy actors take place in a vacuum. Instead, they are influenced by formal and informal institutions, which—like agency— inform, constrain and impact on policy

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<sup>53</sup> Mottier, “From Welfare to Social Exclusion: Eugenic Social Policies and the Swiss National Order”, 256.

<sup>54</sup> Vivien A Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism. Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings”, in *The Argumentative Turn Revisited. Public Policy as Communicative Practice*, ed. Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2012), 91.

<sup>55</sup> John L. Campbell, “Ideas, Politics, and Public Policy”, *Annual Review of Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2002): 29.

processes. While the formal institutions encompass, for instance, official rules and constitutional procedures that govern policy-making processes, informal institutions consist of norms, patterns of belief and behaviour, world views and other loose but persistent structures that impact on the way policy actors think and act. These institutions provide the frame in which policy-making takes place:

“By defining who is able to participate in different decision-making processes, shape actors’ strategies, and influence what actors believe to be possible and desirable, these rules structure the policy process.”<sup>56</sup>

Formal and informal institutions not only affect the policy process but also determine the degree of openness that different actors display towards certain sorts of policy solutions. Because of this constraining function of institutions, many scholars traditionally argued that institutions —rather than actors and their interests, discourses and ideas— are the critical influential factor for policy-making.<sup>57</sup> But from the viewpoint of an approach that is particularly interested in discourse, it is possible to counter this argument by framing institutions as a factor that interacts with discourses and ideas rather than only limiting them. In fact, on the one hand, it is possible to say that formal and informal institutions constrain and filter discourses that affect policy processes since every new idea, notion or narrative needs to be adapted and tailored to these institutions. But on the other hand, institutions also enable and facilitate the introduction and diffusion of a discourse since they provide the conceptual or constitutional frame for actors to advance, exchange and adopt new ideas and narratives:

“Discourse is fundamental both in giving shape to new institutional structures, as a set of ideas about new rules, values and practices, and as a resource used by entrepreneurial actors to produce and legitimate those ideas, as a process of interaction focused on policy formulation and communication.”<sup>58</sup>

Recognising this interrelation of institutional structures, actors and their ideas, more recent approaches to policy analysis tried to associate the focus on institutions with the consideration of actors and ideas, and proposed different theories that consider interests,

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<sup>56</sup> Jones, “Policy-Making as Discourse”, 13.

<sup>57</sup> The sociologist John Campbell criticises this “blind spot” of institution-oriented frameworks for policy analysis and proposes to overcome it by combining different types of institutionalism, see John L. Campbell, “Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy”, *Theory and Society* 27, no. 3 (1998): 4.

<sup>58</sup> Vivien A. Schmidt and Claudio M. Radaelli, “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe: Conceptual and Methodological Issues”, *West European Politics* 27, no. 2 (2004): 192. In addition, discourses can also exert effects on the policy process by being embedded in rules and procedures and, consequently, by becoming institutionalised themselves. This process and the methodological challenge of analysing it are approached in detail in the next chapter about the methodological and analytical approach of this thesis.

ideas and institutions as separate, yet interrelated elements that are all constitutive for the policy process.<sup>59</sup> Most of these approaches, however, do not connect these elements through a focus on (policy) discourse and the way in which both actors and institutions interact with ideas in order to produce or change a certain discourse.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, they focus more on the content of discourse —the ideas, notions and narratives that constitute the discourse— rather than focusing on the interactive processes that shape the discourse and that are part of the understanding of policy discourse applied in this thesis. A notable exception to this tendency is the approach developed by Vivienne Schmidt, who criticises the neglect of discourse-oriented approaches in political sciences with the telling observation:

“[A]lthough political scientists in recent years have generated lots of ideas about ideas, they have engaged in comparatively little discourse about discourse.”<sup>61</sup>

Defining a new type of “new institutionalism”<sup>62</sup>, which she calls “discursive institutionalism”, Schmidt aims to explain how discourse contributes to the success or failure of certain ideas in policy making. Therefore, she proposes a theoretical approach that should allow researchers to combine the consideration of the ideas represented in policy discourse with the assessment of the interactions among actors by whom the ideas are conveyed. The focus on discourse encompasses the concepts and ideas relevant for policy and the interactive processes of communication and policy formulation that serve

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<sup>59</sup> Daniel Béland, “Ideas, Institutions, and Policy Change”, *Journal of European Public Policy* 16, no. 5 (August 2009): 701-18; Campbell, “Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy”; John Hudson, Gyu-Jin Hwang, and Stefan Kühner, “Between Ideas, Institutions and Interests: Analysing Third Way Welfare Reform Programmes in Germany and the United Kingdom”, *Journal of Social Policy* 37, no. 02 (2008): 207-30; B. Peter Rosendorff, “Ideas, Interests, Institutions and Information: Jagdish Bhagwati and the Political Economy of Trade Policy”, paper presented at the Conference in Honour of Jagdish Bhagwati on the occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Columbia University, New York, 2005.

<sup>60</sup> In order to overcome this shortcoming, the Belgian researcher Trisha Meyer complemented the common three-fold focus on ideas, interests and institutions by introducing discourse as a fourth unit of analysis, see Trisha Meyer, “Access and Control. The Political Economy of Online Copyright Enforcement in the European Union”, PhD thesis in Communication Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2014.

<sup>61</sup> Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism”, 304. Schmidt expresses a preference for the concept of “discourse” instead of “ideas”, since it allows for referring to ideas of different levels (policy, programmatic and philosophical), of different types (normative and cognitive) and of different forms, such as narratives, memories, images etc. (ibid., 309).

<sup>62</sup> Schmidt thereby adds a fourth form to the three forms of “new institutionalism” that – according to her – all have significant shortcomings. These forms are (1) “rational choice institutionalism”, which thinks that actors strategically use institutions in order to realise their goals, (2) historical institutionalism, which considers that policy processes are constrained by self-reinforcing historical paths (path-dependency), and (3) sociological institutionalism, which is primarily interested in how norms and world views create meaning for individuals.



to generate and disseminate these ideas.<sup>63</sup> In this context, institutions do not simply serve as external structures that set the rules for policy debates. They are considered to structure the interactions and actors, while, at the same time, being constructed by these interactions. In addition, interests are not simply considered as deriving from material political economy that is external to the discourse; instead, interests are as subjective as ideas, and are thus an additional element that contributes to the complex dynamics of policy discourse creation.

Schmidt summarises this broadened understanding of policy discourse as a departure from a purely postmodernist understanding of discourse in which only the content of ideas has a centre stage position. By focusing on the actual processes of arguing, the creation of these ideas, and hence the material reality outside of the linguistic utterances, is reintegrated in the analysis:

“Discourse [...] is stripped of postmodernist baggage to serve as a more generic term that encompasses not only the substantive content of ideas but also the interactive processes by which ideas are conveyed. Discourse is not just ideas or ‘text’ (what is said) but also context (where, when, how, and why it was said). The term refers not only to structure (what is said, or where and how) but also to agency (who said what to whom).”<sup>64</sup>

Following these considerations, actors and institutions cannot be entirely neglected in discourse analytical studies since they are an intrinsic part of the interactive processes of (policy) discourse creation. Within this thesis, actors, institutions or interests are never the main unit of analysis; they are subordinated to the interest in discourse and are therefore always considered in their relation to the discourse they influence. Consequently, even when taking into consideration the impact of agency and institutional structures, the epistemological and conceptual framework of this thesis maintains its constructivist approach that stemmed from a poststructuralism-inspired understanding of discourse. Yet, it follows more recent policy analysis approaches, which do not give way to any kind of postmodernist denial of a material reality since, after all, “subjective interests as well as institutions can be real even if not material”.<sup>65</sup>

Based on this broadened epistemological and conceptual understanding of policy discourse, the methodological framework of this thesis cannot simply be limited to the analysis of discourse. Instead it needs to reintegrate agency and institutions in the analysis.

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<sup>63</sup> For a general introduction to Schmidt’s understanding of discourse as a set of ideas and interactive process, see also Schmidt and Radaelli, “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe”.

<sup>64</sup> Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism”, 305.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

## 2. Methodological and analytical approach

Based on the outlined understanding of the production of policy discourses, three interrelated dimensions can be identified that are constitutive for the production process and need to be addressed on the methodological level:

- (1) First of all, policy discourse is made of language, arguments, ideas and frames; these elements shape the *discourse* and its meaning.
- (2) Secondly, the production of discourse involves confrontations, agreements and struggles regarding competing solutions and beliefs; these are the *actors and their practices* that contribute to the formation of a policy discourse.
- (3) Thirdly, the actors and practices that shape the content of the discourse do not take place in isolation but are situated in space and time; hence, they are influenced by the concrete *context* in which the discourse creation takes place.

An analytical approach to policy discourse that does not aim to remain on a purely linguistic level needs to take all three dimensions into consideration: *discourse, practice* and *context*. Accordingly, the analysis of policy discourse requires a broader methodological approach than a linguistic-semantic analysis of discursive elements or ideological-political practices.<sup>66</sup> For the particular research purpose of this thesis, the combination of two different strands of methodological approaches is proposed. For the analysis of the policy discourse, the thesis uses a rarely employed methodological approach for the analysis of communication policies: the method of *Argumentative Discourse Analysis*, developed for the analysis of policy discourse. In addition, the analysis of the actors and their practices is inspired and guided by several methodological ideas of *Actor-Network Theory*, developed for studying the creation of knowledge in science and technology. Additional contextual factors of the policy making process, going beyond the practices of actors, are only taken into consideration in their relation to the discourse they influence. Yet, on the empirical level, they are addressed separately in order to explicitly situate the discourse creation in the larger historical, thematic political and organisational background.

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<sup>66</sup> Gasper and Apthorpe, “Introduction”, 2.

## 2.1 Assessing the *discourse*: Argumentative Discourse Analysis

Most of the early and more recent methodological research about the relationship of discourse and policy analysis approaches the subject from a policy-making perspective. Consequently, these reflections on the importance of language for public policy concern *ex-ante* policy analysis, that is the evaluation of policy arguments within the processes of policy planning.<sup>67</sup>

While referring to the same departure point as many discourse analysts —the Greek tradition of rhetoric as well as the linguistic turn in 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy and its further development through structuralism and poststructuralism— early reflections on the argumentative character of policy-making did not consider the outcome of the policy process as “discourse”. Instead, they only assessed the production and transformation of information and ideas before concrete decision-making about policy options.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, scholars regarding policy discourse from this perspective paid close attention “to the actual performances of argumentation and the practical rhetorical work of framing analyses, articulating them, constructing senses of value and significance”.<sup>69</sup> And indeed, in reference to the “linguistic” and “narrative turn”, Fischer and Forester spoke about the “argumentative turn” in the analysis of public policy since they consider the performative concerns of arguing to be as much a part of the analytical process as epistemological concerns.<sup>70</sup>

Drawing on Jürgen Habermas’ critique of technocracy and scientism, as well as on his work on communicative action, with their “argumentative turn”, Fischer and Forester offered an alternative approach to the study of policy-making and policy inquiry. Since then, this post-positivist perspective on policy-making has developed into one of the competing theoretical perspectives in policy research, which focuses on the policy argument as unit of analysis instead of empirical measuring inputs and outputs.<sup>71</sup> The

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<sup>67</sup> This was most prominently done by Majone, *Evidence, Argument, and Persuasion in the Policy Process*; Fischer and Forester, *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*; Louise G White, “Policy Analysis as Discourse”, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 13, no. 3 (1 June 1994): 506-25; Bacchi, “Policy as Discourse”; Frank Fischer, *Reframing Public Policy: Discursive Politics and Deliberative Practices* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2003).

<sup>68</sup> Dunn, *Public Policy Analysis*, 10. In contrary to this *ex-ante* policy analysis, for Dunn “*ex-post* analysis involves the production and transformation of information after policies have been implemented” (ibid., 12). The considerations of this thesis do not follow Dunn in this regard since *ex-post* analysis does not necessarily only look at policy initiatives and their implementation but can also consist in the *ex-post* analysis of policy-making processes and the involved discursive struggles.

<sup>69</sup> Fischer and Forester, *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis, eds., *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2012), 1ff.

literature inspired by the “argumentative turn” thereby (re-)introduced the consideration of discursive reflection and argumentation in policy analysis and the study of the increasingly complex dynamics of today’s policy-making, which cannot be fully captured by more traditional approaches to policy:

“[I]t seems today to be more obvious than ever that the still dominant empiricist orientation in the social and policy sciences cannot adequately grasp this much more complex, uncertain world defined by interconnected networks that blur the traditional boundaries that organize our social political spaces and political arenas. By focusing on argumentation, processes of dialogic exchanges, and interpretive analysis, we need to discover how competing policy actors construct contending narratives in order to make sense of and deal with such uncertain, messy challenges.”<sup>72</sup>

Despite this focus on argumentation, at the outset, Fischer and Forester’s work did not include the usage of discourse analytical methods to examine how policies are made, how they are influenced or how they shape the issue they concern. But in revisiting the “argumentative turn” in policy analysis, Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis recently remarked that, over the years and with the spread of their ideas, attention shifted slightly from “argumentation” to “discourse” as unit of analysis. While this could be viewed as solely a variation in terminology, they state that the two concepts are interrelated but different. “Discourse”, the larger of the two terms, can be seen as a broad set of ideas which shapes concrete argumentative utterances within policy debates, while “argumentation” is necessary in order to express and communicate a certain discourse during all stages of the policy process.<sup>73</sup>

This translation of Fischer and Forester’s argumentative *ex-ante* policy analysis into a discourse-oriented *ex-post* policy analysis, that is the assessment of policy-making processes and the involved discursive struggles by hindsight, was mostly thanks to European scholars like Marteen Hajer<sup>74</sup>, Herbert Gottweis<sup>75</sup> or Des Gasper<sup>76</sup>. In particular, the Dutch political scientist Hajer developed a systematic approach for the

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 6f.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 10f.

<sup>74</sup> Hajer, “Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain”; Maarten Hajer, “Discourse Analysis and the Study of Policy Making”, *European Political Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 61-65; Marteen Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, in *Words Matter in Policy and Planning: Discourse Theory and Methods in the Social Sciences*, ed. Margo van den Brink and Tamara Metz, Netherlands Geographical Studies 344 (Utrecht: KNAG/Nethur, 2006), 65-74.

<sup>75</sup> Herbert Gottweis, “Theoretical Strategies of Post-Structuralist Policy-Analysis: Towards an Analysis of Government”, in *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*, ed. Maarten A. Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 247-65; Gottweis, “Argumentative Policy Analysis.”

<sup>76</sup> Gasper, “Analysing Policy Arguments”.

assessment of policies and their ideological framing, which pays tribute not only to the different strands of discourse analysis but also to the specific concerns of analysing policy-making processes.<sup>77</sup> To clearly mark the focus on “discourse”, he speaks of “Argumentative *Discourse* Analysis” (ADA) instead of “Argumentative *Policy* Analysis” (APA). The interesting element of Hajer’s approach and that of his compatriot Gasper is that they add the performative dimension of APA, meaning the communicative practices that Fischer and Forester emphasised, to the textual and linguistic dimension of discourse analysis as they look at discourse creation at the level of policy-making:

“Discourse analysis – that is the examination of argumentative structure in documents and other written or spoken statements as well as the practices through which these utterances are made.”<sup>78</sup>

Consequently, their approach requires “a disciplined examination of *both* text and context as complementary”.<sup>79</sup> But instead of analysing discourse as “text in context”, which treats “text” and “context” as separate though interconnected elements, the emphasis of the performative dimension of discourse leads to a more radical understanding: discourse is both text and context at the same time because it emerges from an interplay of textual and contextual elements. It is therefore possible to consider ADA as a merge of other, more traditional discourse analytical approaches and the criteria established by Majone, Forester and Fischer for policy planning.<sup>80</sup>

In Hajer’s ADA, just like in Fischer and Forester’s APA, the focus on argumentation and argumentative structures remains the key element. Accordingly, like the latter, it does not primarily concern itself with the examination of *arguments* —a task that could easily be

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<sup>77</sup> Although Hajer exemplifies his approach through the analysis of environmental policies, many of his methodological reflections can easily be adapted to other field, such as —in our case— the field of international communications.

<sup>78</sup> Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 66. Hajer defines “practices” as “embedded routines and mutually understood rules and norms that provide coherence to social life” (*ibid.*, 70). In the next sub-chapter, our understanding of practices and actions by policy actors is defined in more detail.

<sup>79</sup> Gasper and Apthorpe, “Introduction”, 5.

<sup>80</sup> There is not just one single traditional systematic methodological approach for discourse analysis. Besides the distinct modes of Critical Discourse Analysis developed by Fairclough, van Dijk and others, there are various other approaches that are based on Foucault’s thinking, but all differ in their concrete methodologies and underlying assumptions. There is consequently no unique method for conducting discourse analysis. Also Foucault himself never formulated a methodology of discourse analysis but instead refused to give concrete methodical indications, see Linda J. Graham, “Discourse Analysis and the Critical Use of Foucault”, paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education 2005 Annual Conference, Sydney, 2005, 2, <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/2689> (last accessed 20 June 2013); Sally Hewitt, “Discourse Analysis and Public Policy Research”, *Centre for Rural Economy Discussion Paper Series 24* (Newcastle: Newcastle University, 2009): 8.

done by following a more traditional approach— but with the processes of *arguing*, which means the practice of discourse production during which various actors position themselves or try to impose their point of view on others during policy discussions.<sup>81</sup> For this reason, Hajer insists on the crucial differentiation between “discussion” and “discourse”. For him, discourse refers to

“a set of concepts that structure the contributions of participants to a discussion. [...] Illuminating discourse(s) allows for a better understanding of controversies, not in terms of rational-analytical argumentation but in terms of the argumentative rationality that people bring to a discussion. Hence discourse should be distinguished analytically from discussion so as to allow for the differentiation of plural discourses”.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, it is the process of exchanging arguments that is at the centre of all attempts to assess policy discourse from an ADA perspective. Indeed, since in debates the meaning of arguments only emerges from the understanding of counter-positions<sup>83</sup>, the argumentative approach cannot simply be about analysing arguments or political practices: “it is much more about analysing politics as a play of ‘positioning’ at particular ‘sites’ of discursive production”<sup>84</sup>, that in turn reveal power plays.

Accordingly, the focus of ADA is primarily on what Schmidt called the “coordinative discourse” among policy actors.<sup>85</sup> The French political scientist Zittoun refers to the same concept as “low noise discussions”, since these types of unofficial debates commonly go unnoticed by the public.<sup>86</sup> Even more than in the outcome of policy processes, the discourse is reflected in these discussions:

“If we are too focused on the work of technical analysis, we may look too much to the content of presumably ultimate documents; in doing so we will be likely to miss the rich work that precedes and follows document production: the scanning of the political environment for support for and opposition to potential recommendations, the anticipation of threats and dangers that policy and planning measures might counteract, and the subtle negotiating that transpires

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<sup>81</sup> Hajer, “Discourse Analysis and the Study of Policy Making”, 63.

<sup>82</sup> Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 67f.

<sup>83</sup> Hajer, “Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain”, 44.

<sup>84</sup> Hajer, “Discourse Analysis and the Study of Policy Making”, 62.

<sup>85</sup> Recall that Schmidt distinguishes between “coordinative discourse” among policy actors and “communication discourse” between policy actors and the public (Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism. Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings”, 100). However, ADA does not exclude the analysis of “communicative discourse” because official policy statements, through which political actors and public institutions communicate the outcome of policy debates to the broader public, are also taken into consideration.

<sup>86</sup> Philippe Zittoun, “Between Order and Disorder in the Policy Process: Interpreting the Implicit Agenda”, paper presented at APSA Annual meeting, Rochester, 2010, 16.

between agency staff who are always seeking to learn, to protect working relationships, and to maintain their own strategic position as well.”<sup>87</sup>

Another methodological consequence of ADA’s focus on policy debates and arguments is that the analysis of policy discourse not only includes the language or ideas of the various policy actors, but also the actors themselves, their perspectives and the views they criticise. Hence, unlike more traditional discourse analytical approaches, ADA also includes the subject of the policy actor, thereby adding the aspect of “agency” to the analysis of discourse. Zittoun interprets this as an attempt to “reintegrate the subject” into the study of policy; for him, it is the policy actor and his discourse which build the ultimate link between a policy problem and the outcome of the policy process.<sup>88</sup> And indeed, also Hajer couples the analysis of discourse production with the subjects involved in the policy process and their interactions. Instead of being interested in a single policy actor and his discourse, he seeks to identify groups of actors united by a common discourse:

“The real challenge for argumentative analysis is to find ways of combining the analysis of the discursive production of reality with the analysis of the (extradiscursive) social practices from which social constructs emerge and in which the actors that make these statements engage. This is the function of the concept of *discourse coalition*.”<sup>89</sup>

With the concept of “discourse coalition”, Hajer refers to “a group of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of practices, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time”.<sup>90</sup> Others have used the concept to identify the policy actors who share ideas over extended periods of time and who, thanks to their joint forces, are able to convince other political actors, and eventually the public, of the necessity and appropriateness of a certain idea.<sup>91</sup>

The particularity of the concept is that actors do not necessarily need to agree on everything or to coordinate their actions in order to build a discourse coalition. Neither do they need to share the same values or interests, as is often the case in the highly diversified settings of intergovernmental policy debates that involve a large number of

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<sup>87</sup> Fischer and Forester, *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Philippe Zittoun, “Understanding Policy Change as a Discursive Problem”, *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 11, no. 1 (2009): 67; 76f.

<sup>89</sup> Hajer, “Discourse Coalitions and the Institutionalization of Practice: The Case of Acid Rain in Britain”, 45. With his idea of “discourse coalition”, Hajer draws on a concept developed by Peter Wagner and Björn Wittrock in the late 1980s for the study on the influence of social science discourse on politics, using it in a slightly different sense.

<sup>90</sup> Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 70.

<sup>91</sup> Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism. Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings”, 101.

actors, ranging from government representatives to civil society members. Instead, by employing the same narratives and practices, these actors contribute —deliberately or unknowingly— to the emergence, reproduction and assertiveness of a common discourse. Accordingly, the formation of a discourse coalition often becomes apparent only through the formulation of “minimal common policy statement”<sup>92</sup>, that is a short summary of a particular policy problem every actors of the discourse coalition can agree on. At the same time, “discourse coalitions are themselves engaged in constant argumentation in their efforts to develop the arguments that they hope policy actors will ultimately take as their own as they generate policy”.<sup>93</sup>

In essence, instead of focusing on the discourse and strategies of individual actors, in ADA and similar discourse analytical approaches, the creation of policy discourse is analysed as interplay of various actors, groups and coalitions. These groups of subjects cannot be disconnected from their discourses and the underlying power relations. Accordingly, Zittoun suggests that policy actors should always be assessed in connection to their ideas and beliefs:

“Rather than identifying, on one side, the networks and on the other their beliefs, we would like to consider that it is during the experimentation with the connections between belief, problem and public policy that the contingent coalitions are formed which ultimately determine policy content.”<sup>94</sup>

In summary, Argumentative Discourse Analysis, as proposed by Marteen Hajer, offers a promising and, at the same time, challenging methodological approach for the study of discourse creation in the policy context. Combining traditional discourse analytical approaches with the ideas of Argumentative Policy Analysis, developed by Majone, Forester and Fischer for *ex-ante* policy analysis, ADA proposes to study the process of “arguing” and the exchange of arguments in policy debates, rather than their final outcome documents. Taking both discursive and performative dimensions of policy debates into consideration, the approach allows not only for an assessment of the system of thoughts, ideas and practices behind official policy documents and the actors involved, but also of the way in which policy-makers form discourse coalitions in order to construct the subject and the world they speak of during their discussions.

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<sup>92</sup> Zittoun, “Understanding Policy Change as a Discursive Problem”, 78.

<sup>93</sup> Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism. Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings”, 101.

<sup>94</sup> Zittoun, “Understanding Policy Change as a Discursive Problem”, 80.



However, as elaborate as ADA's methodological framework may be with regard to the analysis of the discursive dimension, Hajer and his colleagues from the field of policy studies propose surprisingly few methodological indications for the assessment of the performative dimension of collective discourse production and the creation of discourse coalitions in policy-making.<sup>95</sup> In fact, Hajer develops several concepts as well as a 10-step-procedure for conducting argumentative discourse analysis, but most of these steps concern the examination of discursive elements in policy debates; only a few steps also regard the analysis of the actors and their actions but lack clear methodological indications. Therefore, in this thesis, this methodological and analytical approach is combined with a second approach, which offers more concrete concepts for the assessment of the performative dimension of discourse creation.

## 2.2 Assessing the *practices*: Actor-Network Theory as an analytical approach

Looking at the questions that argumentative discourse approaches raise about how public policies are formed, and how actors create discourse and influence each other in policy debates, it comes as a surprise that they have not more often been combined with Actor-Network Theory, an approach that was explicitly developed for the study of creation processes.

ANT was initiated in the 1980s by a group of French sociologists from the École des Mines de Paris, in particular Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, and their British colleague John Law as an attempt to study "science and technology in the making".<sup>96</sup> Most of ANT's notions and methodological tools were born out of these scholars' empirical case studies in scientific laboratories.<sup>97</sup> Growing in acceptance, particularly after becoming

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<sup>95</sup> See, for instance, Marteen Hajer, "Coalitions, Practices, and Meaning in Environmental Politics: From Acid Rain to BSE", in *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, ed. Jacob Torfing and David Howarth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 306ff.

<sup>96</sup> Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Open University Press, 1987).

<sup>97</sup> Michel Callon, "Struggles and Negotiations to Define What Is Problematic and What Is Not: The Socio-logic of Translation", in *The Social Process of Scientific Investigation*, vol. 4, Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook 1980, ed. Karen D. Knorr, Roger Krohn and Richard Whitley (Boston: Reidel, 1980), 197-219; Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, "Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: How Actors Macro-Structure Reality and How Sociologists Help Them to Do so", in *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Towards and Integration of Micro- and Macro-Sociologies of Knowledge?*, ed. Karin Knorr-Cetina and Aaron V. Cicourel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 277-303; Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Briec Bay", in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge, 1986), 196-223.

more widely known among Anglo-American sociologists, ANT quickly became a popular approach for observing the creation of knowledge in science and technology as well as the formation of social order and the creation of meaning in all different kinds of institutions, such as organisation, health, economy, family and policy. During this process, the fundamental ideas and core concepts of ANT were often heavily criticised and misinterpreted from different sides. To prevent the interpretation of ANT from spiralling out of control, Latour and his colleagues constantly defended and re-introduced their ideas and thereby developed them further into a more general approach for the study of social dynamics.<sup>98</sup>

ANT offers a set of useful tools for the methodological approach and the theoretical contributions of this thesis. Indeed, because tracing actions is more fruitful than trying to observe a stable situation, ANT-inspired research tries to follow construction processes in order to observe the object or meaning “in the making”.<sup>99</sup> Hence, it lends itself to the study the creation of policy discourse in a poststructuralist, multi-linear and multi-causal perspective.

To better understand ANT’s theoretical implications, it is necessary to emphasise Law’s claim that “the crucial analytical move made by actor-network writers [...] [is] the suggestion that the social is nothing other than patterned networks of heterogeneous materials”.<sup>100</sup> According to ANT, our social world is not only made of people, but also of machines, buildings, finances and texts and any other kind of non-human entities. Consequently, “if human beings form a social network it is not because they interact with other human beings. It is because they interact with human beings and endless other materials too”.<sup>101</sup>

Based on this fundamental claim, ANT considers society —just like any kind of scientific invention, technology, machines and other institutions— to be an effect produced by networks of these miscellaneous elements. Likewise, social constructs such as hierarchy, power and knowledge are also seen as being generated by these heterogeneous networks, rather than being considered as underlying structures of the networks. This is the reason

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<sup>98</sup> Bruno Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory”, *Soziale Welt* 47, no. 4 (1996): 369-81; John Law and John Hassard, eds., *Actor Network Theory and after* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999); Bruno Latour, “On Recalling ANT”, in *Actor Network Theory and after*, ed. John Law and John Hassard (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 15-25; John Law, “Traduction/Trahison: Notes on ANT”, *Convergencia. Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 13, no. 42 (2006): 47-72.

<sup>99</sup> Bruno Latour, “An Interview with Bruno Latour”, ed. T. Hugh Crawford, *Configurations* 1, no. 2 (1993): 265.

<sup>100</sup> John Law, “Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity”, *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 5, no. 4 (1992): 379-93.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

why ANT lends itself much more to answering *how*-questions than *why*-questions.<sup>102</sup> Instead of searching for comprehensive explanations about *why* social orderings (like power, organisation, structure, etc.) exist or function in the way they do, ANT questions *how* these orderings are contingently created through relationships between human and non-human actors. Hence, it focuses on the creation of relations at the intersection of macro and micro-level, in contradistinction with political economy approaches that look for deep-down homogeneous forces at work below the heterogeneous surface of structures and institutions.

For the analysis of policy discourse in intergovernmental settings, this means that the employment of certain ANT tools allow the researcher to examine, in a very concrete manner, how power relationships, policy ideas and discourses are created in the international context. Showing asymmetry and heterogeneity in this contexts enables the researcher to analyse inequalities and power unbalances without reducing them to economic forces and geopolitical trends only. Thus, ANT-inspired *how*-answers can illuminate possible *why*-answers in a non-deterministic manner.

There are, however, a number of challenges for applying ANT to the kind of research undertaken in this thesis:

First of all, there have been surprisingly few studies to date that combine policy or discourse analysis with elements of Actor-Network Theory. This thesis is influenced by a few examples of empirical research, like the work of the Belgian researcher Jan Teurlings, who combines a Cultural Studies approach with ANT for the study of institutional practices and power relationships in television productions.<sup>103</sup> Confronting the notion of “power” as defined by ANT with Foucault’s concept, Teurlings identified ANT’s “materialist approach to power” as an excellent tool for analysing institutional power relationships that take place in highly organised settings. A very different —but for our purpose, even more useful— methodological combination is done by Marek Mikus. In his work on strategies, meanings and actor-networks in sustainable development, he combines an ANT approach with the analysis of policy argumentation in order to assess how projects become real through the work of generating and translating interests among actors.<sup>104</sup> Focusing on the creation of a transnational discourse, he also raises the question

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Jan Teurlings, “Dating Shows and the Production of Identities: Institutional Practices and Power in Television Production”, PhD thesis in Communication Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, 2004.

<sup>104</sup> Marek Mikus, “Strategies, Meanings and Actor-Networks: Community-based Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Comoros”, Final Thesis MSc Anthropology and Development, London School of Economics, 2009.

of how the different conceptual perspectives of ANT and discourse analysis can be combined.<sup>105</sup>

Secondly, although ANT has been widely used to study various sorts of processes, there is a common misunderstanding regarding the interpretation of ANT as a theoretical approach without any methodological repertoire.<sup>106</sup> But the originators of ANT never conceived it as a systematic theory with a clear outline, nor as a rigid methodology that follow strict rules; instead, it was thought to be a loose toolbox, whose tools are best explained by their usage:

“[O]ne might represent actor network theory by performing it rather than summarising it. By exploring a small number of case studies rather than seeking to uncover its ‘fundamental rules’.”<sup>107</sup>

In this thesis, ANT is used in exactly this way: not as an elaborated social theory with programmatic structures, but as a flexible theoretical and methodological approach offering different tools, from which are only selected those concepts and ideas that are particularly useful for analysing the performative dimension of policy discourse creation.

Due to its flexible nature, every research drawing on the concepts and ideas of ANT differs in its objectives and concrete methods. But all ANT-inspired studies have the same basic ambition: “by describing, being attentive to the concrete state of affairs, finding the uniquely adequate account of a given situation”.<sup>108</sup> To find this account, it is possible to identify three major methodological claims that ANT-inspired studies usually respect:

- (1) First, ANT-inspired research does not start from any *a priori* assumptions about roles, structures, motivations or relationships. In fact, for ANT, there is no pre-established component that could be used as an incontrovertible starting point, and in particular, no assumed group or network.
- (2) Instead, and this is the second claim, ANT needs to start by “following the actors” and the “traces they left behind by their activity of forming and dismantling groups”

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<sup>105</sup> An interesting and rare example for the use of Actor-Network Theory for the study of global politics of the Internet, which is both methodologically and thematically close to this thesis, is Mikkel Flyverbom’s analysis of Internet Governance institutions. He does not, however, address the combination of discourse analysis and ANT. Mikkel Flyverbom, *The Power of Networks – Organizing the Global Politics of the Internet* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011).

<sup>106</sup> Richie Nimmo, “Actor-Network Theory and Methodology: Social Research in a More-than-Human World”, *Methodological Innovations Online* 6, no. 3 (2011): 109.

<sup>107</sup> Law, “Traduction/Trahison: Notes on ANT”, 1.

<sup>108</sup> Bruno Latour, “On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (Somewhat) Socratic Dialogue”, in *The Social Study of Information and Communication Technology: Innovation, Actors, and Contexts*, ed. Chrisanthi Avgerou, Claudio Ciborra, and Frank Land (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 64.

and networks.<sup>109</sup> Hence, instead of “studying” the actors, the researcher “observes” them by listening to them, looking at what they do, and giving a precise account of their actions and thinking.<sup>110</sup> This account of actors, their behaviour, relationships and beliefs is completed when all actors who contribute to the construction of an object or meaning are fully traced, and no additional explanation has to be added in order to explain their actions.<sup>111</sup>

- (3) The third methodological postulation of ANT therefore consists —analogue to the abandonment of all *a priori* assumptions— in the renunciation of all *a posteriori* explanations added to the description in order to give external justifications for the behaviour of the actors. Latour particularly criticises the tendency of referring to external theoretical frameworks to explain their own actions to the observed actors.<sup>112</sup>

Taking into account these three methodological claims, it appears that ANT shares many traits with ethnographic methods. Thus, for instance, the description deriving from the observation of an ANT researcher is similar to Clifford Geertz’s idea of a “thick description”<sup>113</sup>, but appears less formalised and does not have the ambition of reaching theoretical generalisations that would allow for explaining the observations. In fact, in the development of ANT, Latour, Callon and Law drew greatly on Harold Garfinkel’s approach of ethnomethodology. In the same way as ANT, Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology does not have a formal methodology or rigid empirical claims.<sup>114</sup> Instead, it postulates that the subject to be studied imperatively needs to have priority over methods and concepts, which should be adapted to the subject rather than the other way around.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, neither ANT nor ethnomethodology leads to any theoretical inductions about society but simply to a deeper understanding of social behaviour in unique contexts:

“[ANT] was never a theory of what the social is made of, contrary to the reading

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<sup>109</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>110</sup> Latour, “On Recalling ANT”, 20.

<sup>111</sup> Latour, “On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (Somewhat) Socratic Dialogue”, 67.

<sup>112</sup> Latour, “On Recalling ANT”, 19; Latour, “On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (Somewhat) Socratic Dialogue”, 71.

<sup>113</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 6ff.

<sup>114</sup> For a comprehensive introduction to the origins of ethnomethodology see Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967); Harold Garfinkel, “On the Origins of the Term ‘Ethnomethodology’”, in *Ethnomethodology*, ed. Roy Turner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), 15-18; John Heritage, *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

<sup>115</sup> Jörg R. Bergmann, “Harold Garfinkel und Harvey Sacks”, in *Qualitative Forschung: ein Handbuch*, ed. Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff, and Ines Steinke (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000), 57.

of many sociologists who believed it was one more school trying to explain the behaviour of social actors. For us, ANT was simply another way of being faithful to the insights of ethnomethodology: actors know what they do and we have to learn from them not only what they do, but how and why they do it. [...] Far from being a theory of the social [...] it always was [...] a very crucial method to learn from the actors without imposing on them an *a priori* definition of their world-building capacities.”<sup>116</sup>

A second aspect that ANT shares with ethnomethodological approaches is the belief that the researcher’s comments on his observations should always stay behind the observed actors’ expressions in order to “let the actors have some room to express themselves”<sup>117</sup>. For this reason, the language used by ANT does not consist in well-chosen, precise and sophisticated terms as is the language used in traditional sociology. In fact, Latour claims that he and his colleagues did not try to develop a “meta-language” for ANT, but rather an “infra-language”. As a result, the ANT-terminology varies across the different empirical studies and theoretical accounts: a term can have various meanings, while different terms are sometimes used to refer to the same concept.<sup>118</sup>

The significance of this link between ethnomethodology and ANT for the analysis of policy discourse and its creation during policy debates is evident: being particularly interested in *how* certain policy ideas become dominant in policy debates, the use of ethnographic observation allows for the context and the concrete practices of actors involved in these debates to be meticulously traced. Thus, it helps to assess the performative dimension of policy discourse, consisting of the processes of arguing among actors and their practical, theoretical, scientific, oral or written contributions to the shaping of notions, concepts and ideas. Moreover, giving priority to the actors’ vocabulary rather than rigid methodological terms is helpful for the analysis of discourse, in which the assessed concepts and notions need to remain stronger than those of the researcher.

However, despite the various advantages that an ANT and ethnography-inspired methodological approach might offer for the analysis of policy discourse creation, it also

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<sup>116</sup> Latour, “On Recalling ANT”, 19f.

<sup>117</sup> Latour, “On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (Somewhat) Socratic Dialogue”, 63.

<sup>118</sup> For the sake of coherence, this thesis mostly refers to ANT-notions as used by Bruno Latour in his empirical and theoretical writing. The concentration on Latour’s work does not result from an arbitrary selection, but from an extensive reading of ANT-literature. For definitions of terms and concepts used by other ANT-authors see Madeleine Akrich and Bruno Latour, “A Summary of a Convenient Vocabulary for the Semiotics of Human and Nonhuman Assemblies”, in *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 259-64.

poses some challenges that are not easily overcome. Most of these challenges are linked to the rejection of any kind of *a priori* and *a posteriori* explanations that would allow the observed processes and actors to be contextualised. If rigidly applied, this methodological principle demands that the particular influence of one actor over others, or an actor's preference for an idea instead of another, not be justified by referring to any kind of external system or source of power, institutional structures, economic forces or historical legacies. Instead, all explanations need to emerge from the observation of the actors and their meaning-building capacities.

For the assessment of UNESCO's policy-making and discourse, this claim has a double-edged effect: On the one hand, it significantly facilitates the description of the performative dimension by reducing the elements to be considered by the researcher. Only those performances of actors and social relations that can be observed by the researcher are considered as constitutive elements of the creation of a policy discourse. Consequently, it is possible to exclude all contextual factors that are not reflected by the concrete practices and discourses under scrutiny. On the other hand, it is exactly this exclusion of external factors that renders it difficult to situate the processes of discourse creation within their larger historical, political, thematic or organisational context. It also implies that no reference can be made, for example, to overarching power relations between member states or to relationships and capacities of single actors that are not reflected by the examined situation itself. Yet, since the research presented in this thesis only focuses on a short period of UNESCO's history, which is strongly influenced by the organisation's past events, overarching institutional dynamics and the global political situation of its member states, these factors do have an impact although it might not be easy to perceive. As a matter of fact, one can often only perceive the influence if the factor is known. Yet, this knowledge of contextual factors does not emerge from the observation of a particular process, and would therefore be rejected by a methodological approach that tries to apply all ANT traditions in a strict way.

But since such a strict interpretation of their methodological postulations was never intended by Latour and his colleagues, this thesis overcomes this methodological challenge by introducing a third category of analysis, consisting in the context in which policy discourse is created. While the analysis of the discursive dimension is informed by the method of Argumentative Discourse Analysis, the use of tools provided by ANT is limited to the analysis of the performative dimension of policy discourse. In addition, all external contextual factors that are relevant to understanding the policy discourse and its creation are analysed separately from the performative and discursive dimension.

## 2.3 Assessing the *context*: Contextual factors in the analysis of policy discourse

The additional extra-discursive factors considered in this thesis are the concrete settings in which the policy-making process is situated. Most of them can be summarised as the “institutional context” of the policy discourse, which is described by Vivienne Schmidt’s theory of “discursive institutionalism” as one of the most crucial influential factors:

“Discourse cannot be examined in isolation. It needs to be understood in institutional context [...]. The institutional context is constituted by the vast range of rules – formal and informal, laws as well as social and political norms and conventions – that set actors’ common frame of reference and help shape not only actors’ perceptions and preferences, but also their modes of interaction. [...] These are the institutional norms and arrangements that set the parameters of what people talk about as well as of who talks to whom in the process of policy-making. They presuppose the cultural norms, historical path dependencies and interest-based behaviours that affect policy-making in a given socio-political setting.”<sup>119</sup>

Accordingly, in order to take into consideration the pertinent institutions, discourse creation should also be analysed in terms of the political and legal rules as well as the cultural and cognitive norms that frame ideas and discourse in different political-institutional settings. However, although the theoretical concept of “institution” is certainly helpful for acknowledging and framing the influence of extra-discursive elements, on the methodological level, its usage implies a thorough assessment of these institutions and the way in which they shape policy processes and discourses, as well as the way in which these institutions themselves are (re-)shaped by all other elements involved in policy processes. This would add a large third analytical dimension to the empirical analysis of this thesis, which would not only require a dedicated methodology but would also shift its focus to a more institutional and less discourse-oriented study.

For the purpose of this thesis, it is therefore more practicable to approach the concrete settings, in which policy processes take place as the socio-political, historical, thematic and organisational context of the policy discourse. But unlike methodological approaches that try to evaluate context as an external factor to the discourse production, for both ADA and ANT, extra-discursive elements can only be relevant if they have a visible influence on the policy discourse and the actors engaged in policy debates. Therefore, it is necessary to define which contextual factors are relevant for the understanding of policy discourse and its creation and which factors can be left out of the picture. In addition, an assessment needs to be made regarding which contextual factors are part of the

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<sup>119</sup> Schmidt and Radaelli, “Policy Change and Discourse in Europe”, 197.



performative dimension and which factors need to be interpreted in addition to the description of actors' practices and interactions.

Although the emphasis on context has a long tradition in discourse analysis, determining what it is that context consists in is complex and may even —as Donahue and Prosser observed— “turn out to be impossible”.<sup>120</sup> In general, the focus on context, in addition to the more apparent textual level of discourse, owes much to Michel Foucault's interpretation of “discourse”. Instead of limiting the examination of discourse to the level of content, Foucault's reflections go beyond a narrow sense of text. For him, it is not only “language”, but also the categories of “practice” and “power” that play a decisive role in his interpretation of discourses.<sup>121</sup> Drawing on Foucault's (and others') reflection on the relationship of power and discourse, the analytical tradition which pays most attention to the context of discourse and thereby distinguishes itself from more traditional linguistic approaches is Critical Discourse Theory.<sup>122</sup> Its most prominent representative, Norman Fairclough, developed a three-dimensional view of discourse which comprises not only the analysis of texts (in spoken or written form), but also the analysis of practices of text production, distribution and reception as well as the consideration of social or sociocultural practices that affect the texts, including power and ideology.<sup>123</sup> In a comprehensive study about the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Organisation and Management Studies, Shirley Leitch and Ian Palmer move beyond Fairclough's three-dimensional view and establish a broad overview of the possible conceptions of “context”. They categorise these conceptions in five main interpretative clusters of context, namely space, time, practice, change and frame, which are helpful for approaching the context of policy discourse creation within an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Donahue and Prosser, *Diplomatic Discourse International Conflict at the United Nations – Addresses and Analysis*, 8; Shirley Leitch and Ian Palmer, “Analysing Texts in Context: Current Practices and New Protocols for Critical Discourse Analysis in Organization Studies”, *Journal of Management Studies* 47, no. 6 (September 2010): 1197.

<sup>121</sup> Véronique Mottier, “Discourse Analysis and the Politics of Identity/difference”, *European Political Science (EPS)* 2, no. 1 (2002): 59.

<sup>122</sup> Leitch and Palmer, “Analysing Texts in Context”, 1195.

<sup>123</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Longman, 1995); Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman, 1989).

<sup>124</sup> Leitch and Palmer, “Analysing Texts in Context.” While several other thinkers belonging to the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (such as Teun A. Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak and others) elaborated more or less precisely on their understanding of “text”, Leitch and Palmer claim that the concept of “context” remained under-theorised in CDA. Yet, the two authors note a difference between those theorists who highlight the cognitive dimension of context (like Van Dijk) and those who focus on the “outer world” (like Fairclough).

The category of “practice” clearly corresponds to what this thesis refers to as the performative dimension of policy discourse, namely the behaviour of actors and their interactions through which they create and shape discourse and position themselves within policy debates. And also the conception of context as “change” can be seen as part of the performative dimension. As a matter of fact, Leitch and Palmer describe the category of “change” as a way to frame and identify those contextual factors that contribute to altering, shifting and imposing new discourses. Consequently, when approaching context as change, the creation of a discourse is seen as a collective production process that involves actors who either compete with each other for the most powerful discursive influence or jointly attempt to shift the discourse towards a new direction:

“When texts were analysed in the context of a *contest*, the focus was on the discursive struggles between the various actors and the discourses in which they participated, including the ways in which those perceived as less powerful resisted change initiatives. When texts were analysed in the context of a *process*, the focus was on the discourse practices associated with a change initiative and the way in which they were enacted.”<sup>125</sup>

Applying this interpretation of context to the study of *policy discourse*, the relevant context consists in the policy debate itself and in the exchanges, struggles and shifts that occur within these debates — all elements that have been identified in the previous chapters as the performative dimension of policy-making. Accordingly, the interpretation of the contextual factors relating to practices and change is conducted via the description of the performative dimension, methodologically inspired by Actor-Network Theory.

Thus, only the two categories of context as space and time remain as interpretative clusters of context that are not part of the discursive or performative dimension.<sup>126</sup> According to Leitch and Palmer, context as space and time need to be understood in the sense of the spatial and temporal settings in which a discourse is created, shaped or exchanged. In order to make these settings more tangible, they further divide the categories of “space” and “time” into several sub-categories, depending on the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 1203.

<sup>126</sup> The fifth category of “frame”, which refers to the methodological and epistemological framing of the discourse analysis, is not further considered here. Unlike Leitch and Palmer, the conceptual reflections of this thesis do not situate this category on the level of “context” of discourse but interpret it with reference to the framework used to analyse the discourse.

understanding of context, for instance, as intratextual, situational, organisational, institutional setting or in relation to past events.<sup>127</sup>

The conceptualisation of “context as space” serves to interpret policy discourse and the policy processes that contribute to its creation in relation to other venues, processes or events.<sup>128</sup> The organisational context is particularly important for the analysis of UNESCO and its policy discourse on the information society since it refers to the concrete organisational setting in which the policy debates take place, including the set-up of the programme sector or division involved in the debate, or the distribution of responsibility among UNESCO staff members. Extending the spatial context to a larger field, both organisational and institutional settings can be considered as influential, including the relations between organisations (for example the relation between ITU and UNESCO) or between different sectors within UNESCO (for example the relation between UNESCO’s Communication Sector and the Sector for Culture). On an even larger scale, “context as space” can even refer to the overarching socio-economic or political settings in which the policy processes take place (for example the restructuration of power relations after the end of the Cold War, or the distribution of resources accompanying all globalisation processes). Together, these different spatial settings frame the policy discourse and its creation and can therefore be considered as relevant context.

In addition, the conceptualisation of “context as time” allows policy discourse to be interpreted in its temporal relation to other discourses, processes and events.<sup>129</sup> On the one hand, this can mean comparing a discourse to another one that appears before, after or in parallel. In the case of this study, this means —for instance— considering UNESCO’s discourse on the information society in relation to the organisation’s discourse on cultural diversity, which appeared at the same time, or to the discourse on communication for development, which preceded it. In a similar way, the conceptualisation of “context as time” makes it possible to consider the historical settings in which the discourse creation takes place. Thus, the concrete policy processes are interpreted in relation to events and processes that take place before and after them, for example the debate about the New World Information and Communication Order, which preceded UNESCO’s reflection on the information society, or the World Summit on the Information Society, which came after. All of these other discourses and events frame the

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<sup>127</sup> For a full overview of the different sub-categories and their definitions, see Leitch and Palmer, “Analysing Texts in Context”, 1200ff.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 1201.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 1202.

discourse under scrutiny, and although their impact might not be immediately visible in the observation of the concrete policy processes, they are relevant to their understanding. This does not, however, imply that contextual factors such as time, space or other settings of policy-making are relevant *per se*; they only gain relevance from the moment their consideration is necessary for the understanding of the discursive struggles and internal occurrences of policy processes. But the decision about whether their consideration is necessary can only emerge from the observation of these processes coupled with a broader knowledge of its context. Consequently, the consideration of context in this thesis represents a partial turn away from ANT's epistemological renunciation of *a priori* knowledge about the subject to be observed. Yet, while this knowledge might exist, it only flows into the analysis if it is considered relevant to the understanding of the subject.

### **3. Combining ANT and ADA: A methodological framework for the study of policy discourse**

Even though the approaches introduced above differ with regard to some of their underlying epistemological assumptions, combining their methods and tools allows for the development of a methodological framework that makes it possible to consider discourse, practices and context together, as intrinsically connected elements. Since the introduction of the extra-discursive context does not represent a full third dimension of analysis and does not, therefore, follow any precise methodological approach, the methodological framework of this thesis consists primarily in the combination of the concepts and tools proposed by Actor-Network Theory and Argumentative Discourse Analysis, complemented with the CDA-inspired consideration of contextual factors. Hence, this chapter introduces this framework by elaborating on a number of selected concepts proposed by these two research approaches. In addition, it proposes several combinations of these concepts, which allows for both the performative and the discursive dimensions of policy discourse and for the policy processes that lead to its creation to be framed.

### 3.1 Setting the network's boundaries

The main distinction between Actor-Network Theory and other network theories consists in the fact that for ANT, a “network” is simply an analytical tool and not a form or theory of organisation.<sup>130</sup> In particular, the term does not relate to the common technical metaphor of a network in the form of a strategically organised net of interconnected points, like a train or telephone network.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, ANT also profoundly differs from the study of social networks and the assessment of social relations between individual human actors or groups, as conducted by Social Network Analysis (SNA).<sup>132</sup> Unlike SNA, ANT does not limit itself to only human individual actors. Instead, it focuses on interactions rather than relations and observes the roles that result from these interactions:

“[W]e are not primarily concerned with mapping interactions between individuals. Rather, in conformity with the methodological commitment to follow the actors no matter how they act, we are concerned to map the way in which they define and distribute roles, and mobilize or invent others to play these roles.”<sup>133</sup>

To clearly mark the difference from other network theories, Latour sometimes speaks about “work-net” instead of “network”, emphasising the component of “work” or “action” that is important for the constitutions of the “net”.<sup>134</sup>

ANT borrowed the term “network” from the French philosopher and writer Diderot, who used the French term “réseau” in his 1769 work, *Le rêve de d'Alembert*, to relate to matter and bodies and to avoid the Cartesian divide between matter and spirit. He thereby

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<sup>130</sup> To avoid the difficulties brought by the name “Actor-Network Theory”, its originators proposed several other terms over the years, as e.g. “sociology of translation”. Since the idea of “rhizome”, borrowed from the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, represents the internal structure and texture of the interrelations among actors better than the “network” notion, Latour even proposes the name “Actant/rhizome ontology”, an obscure title that probably would have caused even more confusion than the original name (Latour, “An Interview with Bruno Latour”, 262).

<sup>131</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 129. Following Latour, an Actor-Network lacks the characteristics of a technical network since it commonly does not have any paths or strategically positioned nodes. Only in its very final, stabilised state —after the actors have created a stable social order— an Actor-Network can achieve a form similar to that technical shape, see Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory”.

<sup>132</sup> For a comparison of different network theories, such as SNA and ANT, see Grahame Thompson, “Social Network Analysis, Transaction-Cost Analysis, and Actor-Network Theory: Three Approaches to Networks”, in *Between Hierarchies and Markets. The Logic and Limits of Network Forms of Organization*, ed. Grahame Thompson (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 53-86.

<sup>133</sup> John Law and Michel Callon, “Engineering and Sociology in a Military Aircraft Project: A Network Analysis of Technological Change”, *Social Problems* 35, no. 3 (1988): 285.

<sup>134</sup> Latour, “On Recalling ANT”, 15; Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 133.

gave the notion a strong ontological component which is still visible in ANT.<sup>135</sup> Consequently, for ANT, a “network is a concept, not a thing out there”, which means that a network does not exist in reality where it could be approached and analysed by a researcher.<sup>136</sup> *It is simply a methodological instrument with two different functions: first, the network is a tool used by the researcher to make his description; and secondly, a network is what is drawn by the description.*<sup>137</sup>

To put it differently: On the one hand, when actors do things, they leave traces which can be observed by the researcher using the idea of a network as a tool to describe them. Latour uses the example of a painter who draws a grid on the background before painting a three-dimensional object. Similar to the grid, which is not what the artist is actually painting but simply a tool, the network is just a tool to describe something but not what is being described.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, the actions that flow from one actor to the others, together with the description of the observer who captures these actions, constitute a network. Accordingly, for ANT, a network consists in what is actually described and cannot contain any elements, such as additional actors or causes that are external to the description.

For the analysis of meaning-making within intergovernmental policy processes, ANT’s tool of a network allows the object of investigation to be broadened and, at the same time, restricted:

On the one hand, the constitutive elements do not necessarily remain limited to the actors within the institution or institutional setting, in which the policy-making is allocated. All influences, which have a traceable impact on the process, are part of the considered sphere. This also includes actors who are located outside the policy-making institution or excluded from the decision-making processes, as long as their non-participation or exclusion plays a role for the results of the processes. In this thesis, this principle makes it possible, for instance, to methodologically justify considering the influence of the United States on UNESCO’s decision-making during the 1980s and 1990s, even though the country had withdrawn from the organisation in 1983. The fact that the United States was absent from the debates had an observable influence and, consequently, needs to be taken into account.

On the other hand, there is no need to consider elements which were officially part of the decision-making bodies or institutional settings but did not contribute to the creation of

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<sup>135</sup> Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory.”

<sup>136</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 131.

<sup>137</sup> Latour, “On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (Somewhat) Socratic Dialogue”, 63.

<sup>138</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 131.

meaning within the observed policy processes. Likewise, no external forces or motivations, such as geopolitical tensions or—in our case—the end of the Cold War, have to be taken into consideration, as long as their effects are not reflected by the practices of the observed actors or as long as the observer does not consider them as relevant or influential. In essence, an ANT-inspired network description limits the object under scrutiny to those elements that have an observable impact on discursive struggles. Yet, as discussed earlier, ANT does not acknowledge the methodological challenge that the researcher's capacity to perceive and observe certain elements is not independent from its *a priori* knowledge and assumptions.

### 3.2 Broadening the understanding of actors

From the above understanding of a network, it follows that an actor who does not act cannot leave any trace which could be observed and described. In that case, according to ANT, he cannot even be considered an actor.<sup>139</sup> Consequently, the common connotation, prevalent in policy studies, of an “actor” being someone “who wishes to grab power makes a network of allies and extend[s] his power — doing some ‘networking’ [...]” does not work for ANT-inspired studies.<sup>140</sup> Instead, “actor” is simply a semiotic definition comprising all kinds of “actants” that act or to which activity is granted by others.

Throughout the large amount of ANT-literature, the terms “actor” and “actant” are used interchangeably; it nevertheless seems that “actant” instead of “actor” is often used to emphasise that “the ability to act is considered an outcome of relations, rather than an inherent property of certain—typically human—entities”.<sup>141</sup> And indeed, an “actor” or “actant” is defined by its capacity to act or exert any kind of activity, even if it is only through other actors:

“Agencies are always presented in an account as *doing* something that is, making some difference to a state of affairs, translating some As into Bs through trials with Cs. Without accounts, without trials, without differences, without

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<sup>139</sup> Latour, “On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (Somewhat) Socratic Dialogue”, 70.

<sup>140</sup> Latour, “On Actor-Network Theory.”

<sup>141</sup> Ted Rutland and Alex Aylett, “The Work of Policy: Actor Networks, Governmentality, and Local Action on Climate Change in Portland, Oregon”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26, no. 4 (2008): 628.

transformations in some state of affairs, there is no meaningful argument to be made about a given agency, no detectable frame of reference.”<sup>142</sup>

As a consequence, ANT-inspired studies cannot simply mention actors without giving an account of their actual doing. This “doing” can also consist in the decision not to intervene in certain debates or to slow down a process or a decision by refusing to act. As long as this action —consisting in the refusal of action or intervention— has a visible influence on the other actors or the network, it needs to be considered. At the same time, the sphere around actors who leave traces cannot simply be filled-up with the actions or refusal of action of actors for which no account can be given; this sphere has to be left blank, like unknown spots on a map.

Conversely, everything that is a source of action, whatever its nature, is considered an actor. This broadened understanding of actors does not just include human individual actors or groups. It also includes non-human actors, such as animals, objects, texts, conversations, debates, rules and procedures. With this move, called the principle of “generalized symmetry”, ANT’s originators tried to overcome the duality between human and non-humans, subjects and objects, society and nature. By declaring that “we have never been modern”<sup>143</sup>, Latour argues that the modernist distinction between the natural and the social is artificial: it is simply inscribed upon the real world through knowledge practices invented by modernist thinkers. According to him, even postmodernism, with its focus on discourse and language as medium between nature and society, could not leave the distinction behind but merely added the sphere of discourse to the other two. ANT’s instigators instead postulate that natural phenomena, social phenomena and discourse should not be considered as distinct objects but as hybrids “coproduced in a process of the reciprocal tuning of facts, theories, machines, human actors, and social relations”.<sup>144</sup>

In this regard, ANT takes a different ontological stance from that of many discourse analytical approaches. Unlike the poststructuralist belief that everything only exists to the extent that it is represented in text and discourse, for ANT, all actors —whether they are

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<sup>142</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 53.

<sup>143</sup> Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>144</sup> Andrew Pickering, “Book Review: We Have Never Been Modern”, *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 257. With his most recent work, Latour moves away from both Actor-Network Theory and its proclamation that modernity never existed, and aims at building a new philosophical anthropology for which his readers act as co-inquirers. See Bruno Latour, *Enquêtes sur les modes d’existence: Une anthropologie des modernes* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2012).



human, non-human, social or material— have a reality outside the text.<sup>145</sup> With regard to the subject of this thesis, this means that concrete problems, which might not yet be reflected in policy debates and documents, can actually influence the policy discourse before they are concretely addressed by it. Hence, changes that occur “hors-texte” (for example new technological developments or their social consequences) need to be taken into consideration as soon as their influence is visible and traceable in the actor-network. Despite not yet being reflected in the discourse, they cannot be excluded from the analysis of the discourse creation.

In addition to this possibility of epistemologically justifying the inclusion of phenomena of the real world into the analysis, ANT’s principle of “generalized symmetry” offers two other methodological advantages for the study of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society:

First, it makes it possible to frame methodologically the multiple elements that lead to the creation of policy discourses in institutional settings such as intergovernmental organisations. Besides the official representatives of member states, experts, international civil servants, consultants, interns and other human agents who are involved in UNESCO’s policy and decision-making, the organisation’s official and unofficial procedural rules also have an impact. Indeed, policy-makers interact through fixed *modi operandi* that influence the outcome of decision-making as much as the human actors within it do. In addition, the time and place in which policy debates occur also contribute to shaping them and need to be considered as “acting” elements. The enlarged semiotic definition of “actor” allows them, as well as other elements, to be considered as independent actants that are constitutive for the policy process. In addition, since changes in technologies eventually result in changes in policy solutions, the policy issue itself—in our case digitalisation and its effects on society—is just as much an actor in the described networks as all other observed elements.

Secondly, and even more importantly, the principle of “generalized symmetry” also allows all documentation of policy processes—such as texts, debates, minutes, reports and intergovernmental instruments like resolutions or recommendations—to be considered as actors of these processes. This is particularly helpful since the period under scrutiny in this thesis lies in the past, even though it is recent. Consequently, it is not possible to observe the object of study—the creation of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society—by following the policy actors in their daily work, as was done by

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<sup>145</sup> Felix Stalder, “Actor-Network-Theory and Communication Networks: Towards Convergence”, 1997, [http://felix.openflows.com/html/Network\\_Theory.html](http://felix.openflows.com/html/Network_Theory.html) (last accessed 12 June 2014).

Callon and Latour in most of their empirical studies. All knowledge must instead derive from documents, texts and personal accounts, in written or oral form. Yet, basing an analysis solely on archival sources and oral accounts is often regarded as a limitation to an ethnomethodological or ANT-inspired research approach. Indeed, most consider “the analysis of ‘mute’ texts as a poor substitute for interaction with reflexive subjects and ‘proper’ ethnographic observation of lived practices”.<sup>146</sup>

Although Latour himself conducted two (semi-)historical studies —on the *Making of Law* by the French Conseil d’Etat and on the *Pasteurization of France*<sup>147</sup>— ANT has not often been connected with studies of the past. While the methodological and conceptual question of “how to trace the agency of nonhuman and human actors through the layer of human symbolic and social mediation represented by documents”<sup>148</sup> appears difficult, the sociologist Richie Nimmo recognises in ANT a means for assessing sources in a very direct and empirical way. To him, they appear ideal for the construction of coherent accounts of complex historical developments: instead of treating texts as simple representations of a complex network of practices and relations between involved actors, texts are just other acting elements of the network since they mediate the relations between actors.<sup>149</sup>

Accordingly, instead of looking at them as sources that are external to the observed sphere, documents and oral accounts can be analysed as parts of the interactions constituting the network:

“Thus texts as mobile and material inscriptions are active agents which assemble, shape and connect practices, and in doing so enact objects, constitute subjects, and inscribe relations, ontological boundaries and domains.”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Nimmo, “Actor-Network Theory and Methodology”, 113. Most of our reflections on the possibility of conducting ANT-inspired historical research derive from Richie Nimmo’s detailed exploration of the problem. Many of the issues and questions he raises are relevant for our research; a more elaborate discussion would, however, go beyond the scope of this thesis. In addition, other scholars explored the possibility of associating ANT or ethnomethodology to historical studies, for instance, by focusing on the possibility of analysing the creation of historiographical narratives through ANT-inspired research, see Michael Lynch, “Ethnomethodology and History: Documents and the Production of History”, *Ethnographic Studies* 11 (2009): 87-106. Also interesting are the methodological reflections of Gabrielle Durepos and Albert J. Millis, “Founding out: An ANTi-History of History and the Establishment of Pan American Airways”, paper presented at the Sixth International Critical Management Studies Conference, University of Warwick, 2009.

<sup>147</sup> Bruno Latour, *The Making of Law: An Ethnography of the Conseil d’Etat* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

<sup>148</sup> Nimmo, “Actor-Network Theory and Methodology”, 112.

<sup>149</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 79ff.

<sup>150</sup> Nimmo, “Actor-Network Theory and Methodology”, 114.

Documents of an official or unofficial nature are reports on real practices and developments, and also non-human actors that are shaped through the interaction with other heterogeneous actors. Instead of trying to retrieve information about the performative dimension of policy-making through the medium of texts, a researcher wishing to combine ANT with (policy) discourse analysis needs to trace the actions performed by and with the help of the texts.<sup>151</sup>

### 3.3 The translation of ideas into policy discourse

The principle of “generalized symmetry” derived from ANT’s claim that an actor cannot simply possess agency; agency needs to be acquired or granted and can only result from the interaction with other human and non-human actors. Agency is thus always relational and never inherent.<sup>152</sup> Moreover, ANT does not conceive actors as stable entities but as flows or changing objects. Every time an actor starts to act and interact, he (re-)shapes other actors and the network itself.<sup>153</sup> The interaction leading to the reshaping of one or several actors is called “translation”.

The term “translation” is borrowed from the French philosopher Michel Serres, in whose work “translation appears as the process of making connections, of forging a passage between two domains, or simply as establishing communication”.<sup>154</sup> In ANT, *the notion of “translation” refers to all processes of negotiations, persuasions, calculations and intrigues, which allow actors to construct common definitions and meanings*. Since it is through these efforts that actors mobilise other actors to share their political, social, cultural or economic interests, the process of “translation” can be considered as the creation of alignment in interest.<sup>155</sup> But the motivation of actors trying to translate their interests is not simply to convince others

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<sup>151</sup> Without reflecting on the possibility of using ANT to observe the creation of discourse, Nimmo sees a connection to discourse study when he calls historiographical ANT-studies “partly a matter of performing a discourse analysis informed by generalised symmetry, which can make an important contribution to unpacking the human-centred discourses and purification which may be embedded in texts” (ibid., 116).

<sup>152</sup> Rutland and Aylett, “The Work of Policy”, 632.

<sup>153</sup> Latour, “An Interview with Bruno Latour”, 262.

<sup>154</sup> Steven D. Brown, “Michel Serres: Science, Translation and the Logic of the Parasite”, *Theory Culture and Society* 19, no. 3 (2002): 5. Brown not only gives a comprehensive introduction to the term “translation” in Serres’ work but also to Callon’s interpretation of it. For more details see also Darryl Cressman, “A Brief Overview of Actor-Network Theory: Punctualization, Heterogeneous Engineering & Translation”, 2009, 9, <http://www.sfu.ca/cprost/docs/A%20Brief%20Overview%20of%20ANT.pdf> (last accessed 20 May 2014).

<sup>155</sup> Rutland and Aylett, “The Work of Policy”, 635.

to work towards the same objectives and priorities, but also to share the same vision of a certain policy issue.

Combining the concept of “translations” as developed by ANT with the argumentative approach to policy discourse analysis, it is possible to identify at least two important means to exchange ideas and translate interests: On the one hand, actor can translate their perspective on a certain policy issue and construct common meaning through the introduction and promotion of a particular “emblematic issue”. On the other hand, they can exchange ideas and translate their interests through proposing a particular “storyline” and applying it to the existing emblematic issues.

For Hajer, emblematic issues play a primary role for the general understanding of policy problems as they are often used as vehicles for discussing more complex sets of problems.<sup>156</sup> By reducing these sets to a simple problem which is “*emblematic* for a bigger ‘problematique’, or, to be more precise, for the *understanding* of that problematique [emphasis in original]”<sup>157</sup>, actors are able to exchange opinions and develop solutions which ideally address the issue in its full complexity. By introducing an emblematic issue, they promote their vision of and discourse on that policy problem and try to convince other actors to share their perspective. Hence, emblematic issues are ideal tools for the translation of interests and ideas.

In addition, according to Hajer, the second way to exchange meaning in debates among policy actors is to refer to storylines through which policy actors convey facts and data. Many statements uttered in policy debates have the form of a story that fulfils an important role within the argumentation. A storyline is, thus, understood as “*a condensed statement summarising complex narratives, used by people as ‘short hand’ in discussions*”.<sup>158</sup> By evoking associations, a speaker assumes that the complex narrative is available in the mind of the other participants of the discussion and is understood in a similar way as intended by him. Consequently, the promotion of one storyline rather than another, summarising the same policy issue, serves as a means for actors to translate their interpretation and narrative of the larger issue. Analysing the employment of emblematic issues and shared storylines by individuals or groups of actors is, in consequence, a way of combining ANT and ADA in order to trace translations.

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<sup>156</sup> Hajer, “Discourse Analysis and the Study of Policy Making”, 64; Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 68.

<sup>157</sup> Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 65.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

There is an additional, third way in which actors are able to translate their interests and ideas and convince other actors to share their vision and discourse of a policy issue. This occurs when an actor tries establishing himself as —what in ANT-tradition is called— an “Obligatory Passage Point” (OPP). This concept was first introduced by Callon’s empirical research in which he describes different moments of translation, with the establishment of OPPs being only one of these moments.<sup>159</sup> In order to render himself indispensable, an actor (which can be an individual or a group of actors) aims to create a situation that has to occur if all actors want to achieve their goals: this situation suits his interest and makes him, or the situation he created, an Obligatory Passage Point for the entire network. Moreover, by obliging all actors to pass through him or his rules, the actor is in a privileged power situation for translating his interests and ideas by proposing and shaping the emblematic issues and storylines dominating the common discourse. Thus, the power relations in the network are temporarily in his favour, giving him the opportunity to exert power in order to maintain and defend his position.

When assessing the processes of “arguing” through which policy debate participants position themselves at particular sites of discursive production, the concept of “translation” allows the researcher to methodologically frame the argumentation strategies of actors as a means of finding compromises or persuading others.

Furthermore, it is possible to measure and describe the success of these argumentation strategies and the underlying discourse. For this purpose, the concept of “translation” is once more combined with concepts proposed by Argumentative Discourse Analysis: a process of translation is fruitfully employed when a specific discourse coalition —defined by Hajer as a group of actors that shares the usage of a particular set of storylines over a particular period of time— becomes dominant; this means, the discourse coalition is able to convince central actors to adopt its vision of a policy problem. In the case of a successful translation process, these convinced actors start to promote the same emblematic issues and to apply the same storylines. Consequently, the discourse proposed by the initial group starts to structure the discourse of these central actors. Hajer calls these moments “discourse structuration”. According to him, *a discourse structuration “occurs when a discourse starts to dominate the way a given social unit [...] conceptualizes the world”*.<sup>160</sup>

In the case of UNESCO’s policy discourse, this moment of discourse structuration occurs when the ideas and discursive elements proposed by one or several actors are

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<sup>159</sup> Callon, “Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay.” The other moments of translation proposed by Callon are less useful for the study of UNESCO’s policy discourse and are therefore not further introduced here.

<sup>160</sup> Hajer, “Coalitions, Practices, and Meaning in Environmental Politics: From Acid Rain to BSE”, 303.

taken on, for instance, by a group of influential member states or by a director or division at the UNESCO Secretariat. Thereby, the actors proposing the discourse exert power over the latter, contributing not only to strengthening the discourse but also to stabilising their own position in the network.

But even if an actor or a group of actors was able to successfully structure the discourse of other actors, the success is often only of a temporary nature. ANT's originators describe this as a moment in which a temporary order is established within the network. This order is unstable and precarious and needs continuous ordering and reordering work so as to be maintained.<sup>161</sup> A good strategy to stabilise the order in favour of a particular actor, its ideas and interests, is to inscribe it in the most durable materials: in ANT-tradition "*inscription*" refers to the efforts of an actor to fix an alignment of interests, which has been achieved through various processes of translation, in a stable way.

The concept of "inscription" was first used by the ANT author Madeleine Akrich to describe how engineers, inventors, manufacturers or designers "inscribe" their vision into the design of an object of technical artefact.<sup>162</sup> In the context of describing the creation of policy discourse, an "inscription" occurs when an actor or a group of actors fixes the successful outcome of translations, for instance of a negotiation or drafting process, not simply in an oral speech or statement, but in a longer-lasting way. This could be its inscription in a written text or—even more ideally—in an organisational setting, such as the creation of a procedure, the launch of a project, or the re-distribution of institutional responsibilities. This is what is referred to, in Argumentative Discourse Analysis, as "discourse institutionalisation": "*If a discourse solidifies in particular institutional arrangements [...] then we speak of discourse institutionalization*".<sup>163</sup>

Hajer sees the concepts of discourse structuration and discourse institutionalisation as a way to measure the influence of a discourse within policy-making processes. A first level of influence is reached if a discourse structures the vision of an important discourse

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<sup>161</sup> Latour, "On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (somewhat) Socratic Dialogue", 63.

<sup>162</sup> Madeleine Akrich, "The Description of Technical Objects", in *Shaping Technology / Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 205-24.

<sup>163</sup> Hajer, "Coalitions, Practices, and Meaning in Environmental Politics: From Acid Rain to BSE", 303. In institutional theory, institutionalisation is considered the process through which institutions are (re-)produced. The idea that these institutions are not simply social constructions, but always constituted through discourse, is developed in great detail in Nelson Phillips, Thomas B. Lawrence, and Cynthia Hardy, "Discourse and Institutions", *The Academy of Management Review* 29, no. 4 (1 October 2004): 635-52. The authors further describe how actions generate texts which are embedded in discourses and produce institutions; these institutions eventually constrain or enable the initial actions and thus reproduce themselves (ibid., 641ff). Hajer's concept of discourse institutionalisation in the field of policy-making is based on the same idea.

coalition. The second level is reached if the coalition's actions then lead to the creation of institutions and organisational practices that reflect this discourse. For Hajer, a discourse is dominant if both conditions are met.<sup>164</sup>

However, from an ANT-perspective, in the same way as the structuration of a discourse only creates a temporary order in the actor network, the institutionalisation of discourse is never permanent or stable. In fact, for ANT, the “durability” of materials is a relational effect of the network and not a characteristic of the material itself. Hence, it is the actors and their interactions that influence the stability of a discourse which has been inscribed into the material: written text can easily be ignored and set-up procedures can be abolished or circumvented when the network shifts in another direction. It is, for instance, often the case that newly elected or appointed policy-makers revoke decisions of their predecessors. Consequently, a dominant discourse, even when institutionalised, can very quickly be overruled.

### 3.4 Power as a result of the network

The stability of a discourse structuration or inscription depends on the distribution and relations of power among actors. Yet, the power relations of actors within a network are never stable but constantly reshaped by the actors themselves. In particular, they do not depend on external power structures or systems of domination. In fact, ANT's concession to relationalism implies that the position of actors within the network is considered a result of the relationships in the network. An actor's importance and power depends only on his position in the network and his capacity to convince other actors to share his interest and to act accordingly. Hence, for ANT, *“power” is a result of the network and not a cause.*

In order to change or stabilise their position in the order of the network, actors steadily position and re-position themselves and each other by translating their interests. When all these processes of persuasion, manipulation and convincing come to an end, according to ANT, a temporary order is established. Even though this order is necessarily always fragile, for a short moment in time all actors have accepted their place in the network; the power relations among the actors in the network are stable. The achieved temporary order is the momentaneous structure of power relations within the network, which can then be observed and described by the researcher.

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<sup>164</sup> Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 71.

Based on the belief that power is always relational, ANT also rejects the idea of a powerful actor able to dominate the other actors from above because of its particular position in the network. This is particularly relevant for the context of the United Nations where every country has only one vote. Thus, formally every country has the same impact on decision-making, independent from external geopolitical and economic realities. In this context, countries that wish to exert power over others need to develop strategies of influence. For ANT, this means that actors cannot simply possess and maintain power. Instead, they need to continuously exercise it through action:

“The problem of power may be encapsulated in the following paradox: when you simply *have* power —*in potential*— nothing happens and you are powerless; when you *exert* power —*in actu*— *others* are performing the action and not you. [...] Power is not something you may possess and hoard. Either you have it in practice and *you* do not have it —*other have*— or you simply have it in theory and you do not have it [emphasis in original].”<sup>165</sup>

Because it helps to observe and describe how actors move within the network in order to exert power over others, Law sees ANT “concerned with the mechanics of power”.<sup>166</sup> However, to state that ANT allows for a theory of power to be developed would be going too far, in the same way as it does not lend itself to theorising any other observation. Instead, it can serve as a non-deterministic method for observing the establishment of power relations in particular contexts.

ANT’s approach to power shares many traits with Foucault’s thinking on this issue, in particular with regard to the belief that power relationships are always relational. In contrast to more deterministic research traditions, for both Foucault and ANT, power is not something that pre-existing entities possess but that is produced on a micro-level during social interaction and relationships.<sup>167</sup> But ANT’s approach differs from Foucault’s on one crucial point, which, from a methodological point of view, makes it both particularly valuable and challenging for conducting discourse-oriented policy analysis: Foucault does not contest the existence of overarching structures of power but only

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<sup>165</sup> Bruno Latour, “The Power of Associations”, in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. John Law (London: Routledge, 1986), 264f.

<sup>166</sup> Law, “Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network”, 380.

<sup>167</sup> Edkins, “Poststructuralism”, 92; Michel Foucault, *Power / Knowledge. Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: The Harvester Press, 1980), 140ff.



stipulates that these structures need to be reproduced in specific contexts in order to persist. In contrast to this, ANT denies the existence of structural relationships.<sup>168</sup>

For ANT, both power and structure are simply temporary and very fragile outcomes of interactions in a network. Thus, while Foucault tries to theorise observations of concrete power relations and develop general statements about modern power, ANT simply “tells empirical stories about processes of translation”.<sup>169</sup> It therefore allows for a detailed description of how power relations function on a micro-level, or as Teurlings puts it: “If Foucault is the cartographer of power [...], then ANT provides the topography of this map.”<sup>170</sup>

ANT’s disbelief in structural power relations is clearly linked to its refusal of any *a priori* assumptions or *a posteriori* explanations by which the researcher could add external aspects to the description of the observed actor-network. And indeed, the consequences for the study of UNESCO’s policy discourse are the same as those already mentioned in the introduction of ANT:

The methodological advantage is obvious. The exclusion of any kind of overarching *why*-questions about power and structure can justify the decision to focus primarily on *how* actors actually translate interests, structure discourse and create meaning. Hence, it allows the observer to concentrate on the performative dimension of policy discourse creation and to limit the consideration of power relationships to those actions and interactions of policy actors that can actually be traced.

From a conceptual point of view, the denial of overarching structures is, however, more problematic. Intergovernmental organisations such as UNESCO are microcosms that reflect the global geopolitical situation. At the same time, due to their organisational structure, history and culture, they develop their own power dynamics, which are not easy for outsiders to perceive or understand. All these large and small-scale power dynamics have a drastic impact on the practices of actors and their relations with each other. Thus, although it might be possible to follow ANT’s postulations and exclude the consideration of overarching power relations between member states, staff members and all other communities involved in UNESCO’s policy-making from the concrete micro-level analysis, it does not mean that they do not exist. In fact, rather than taking over ANT’s perception of power, this thesis follows Foucault’s thinking on the subject and is based

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<sup>168</sup> Jan Teurlings, “Dating Shows and the Production of Identities: Institutional Practices and Power in Television Production”, 80.

<sup>169</sup> Law, “Notes on the Theory of the Actor-Network”, 388.

<sup>170</sup> Teurlings, “Dating Shows and the Production of Identities: Institutional Practices and Power in Television Production”, 82. Teurlings refers to Deleuze calling Foucault a cartographer who develops a new conception of power, see Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1986).

on the belief that these relations are often only perceivable in the situation under scrutiny to an observer holding *a priori* knowledge about them.

In conclusion, the methodological framework outlined here, which combines selected ANT-tools with the concepts proposed by Hajer for the argumentative analysis of discourse and the consideration of additional contextual factors, allows for both the performative and discursive dimensions of the creation of discourse in highly institutional settings to be traced. However, the methodological challenges of the thesis consist not only in applying this framework to the study of UNESCO policy discourse on the information society; they also consist in testing whether it is possible to do so without breaching ANT's fundamental postulations, to palliate some of its limitations and restraints.

#### **4. Methodological set-up**

Up to now, it is purely in a theoretical way that the methodological reflections have considered the various tools of Argumentative Discourse Analysis and Actor-Network Theory as well as the possibilities of combining them for the study of policy discourse. Yet, the real task of this thesis consists in translating the theoretical reflections into empirical research. Therefore, the introduced tools have to be adapted to its particular empirical interest which is to understand UNESCO's development of a discourse on the information society and its policy-making in the field of information at the beginning of the digital age.

Therefore, this last chapter about the conceptual and methodological approach of this thesis outlines its methodological set-up. It starts by translating the analysis of the three categories identified in the second chapter (context, practices and discourse) into concrete research questions, based on the tools offered by ANT and ADA. It then describes the concrete empirical proceeding, starting with archive research and in-depth interviews and moving on to the analysis of all discursive elements. Finally, it also addresses the various problems encountered during the empirical research.

## 4.1 Approaching the triangle of context, practices and discourse

The methodological set-up is based on the three categories of elements that were identified in the reflection on the analytical approach as being constitutive for the production of policy discourse:

- (1) First of all, since policy is made of language, arguments, ideas and frames, the analysis must explore the *discourse* and its meaning.
- (2) Secondly, since the production of discourse involves debates and struggles about competing solutions and beliefs, the analysis must also focus on the *actors and their practices* that contribute to the formation of a policy discourse.
- (3) Thirdly, since the practices shaping the discourse do not take place in isolation, a category was added to the analysis which consists in the broader, relevant *context* in which the discourse creation takes place.

Based on these three categories, the methodological layout appears simple at first sight: The methodological concepts deriving from discourse analysis, in particular Hajer's Argumentative Discourse Analysis approach, can be used to assess the discursive structures in policy debates and documents from various phases of the policy-making process. At the same time, the selected ANT-tools can be used to observe and describe how discourse is produced through practices in a heterogeneous policy-making environment and within its context:

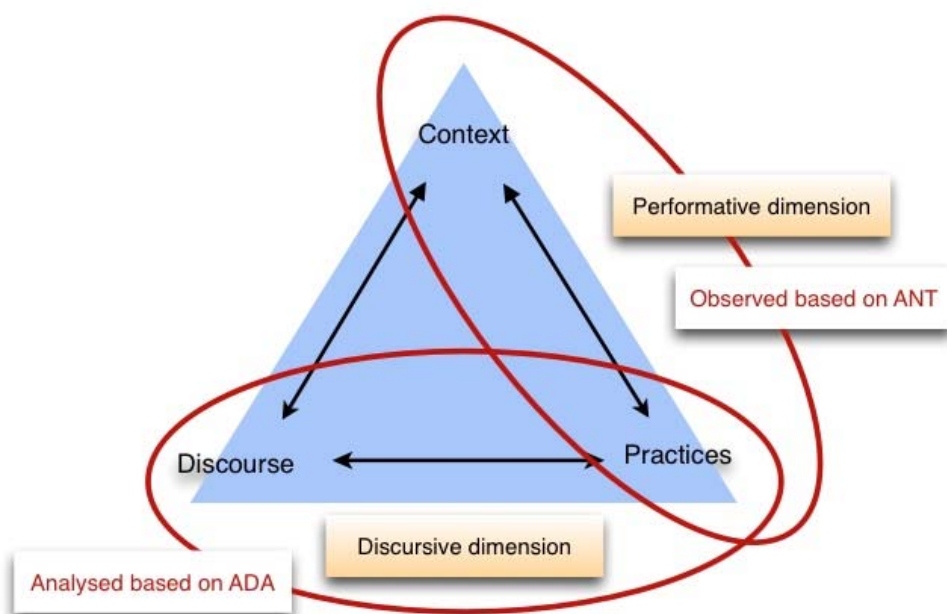


Figure 7: Combination of ANT and ADA in the triangle of context, discourse and practices

However, the challenge of combining the two approaches of ANT and ADA does not consist in applying each of them separately to the distinct dimensions of policy discourse. Instead, in order to analyse policy discourse “in the making”<sup>171</sup> it is necessary for the full triangle of discourse, practices and context to be considered, at all times, as an inseparable object in which all elements mutually interact with each other. Consequently, the discourse is constantly influenced both by the larger historical, political and organisational context, and by the practices of actors. Vice versa, while the larger context influences both discourse and practices, it is also shaped by them. The same is valid for the practices of actors.

Yet, following ANT’s postulation that no contextual factors that do not act upon the network should be considered, that is those factors whose influence is not reflected by the practices of actors, the direct relation between discourse and context is not taken into consideration in this thesis. Instead, all contextual influences on the discourse need to be visible in the performative dimension in order to be part of the observation. Therefore, there is no need for a dedicated additional method for the analysis of the relevant context.

Based on the methodological tools deriving from ANT and ADA for assessing the performative and discursive dimension, it is possible to split up the analysis into multiple, iterative steps that allow for the abstract triangle to be approached from various sides and perspectives. The following figure illustrates how tracing the various elements and processes helps to understand the interplay of practices, discourse and context at the same time, and to connect the different aspects to each other in order to describe the whole as a dynamic actor-network:

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<sup>171</sup> To study a process “in the making” is a reference to ANT’s early empirical studies of science and technology “in the making”, see Latour, *Science in Action*.

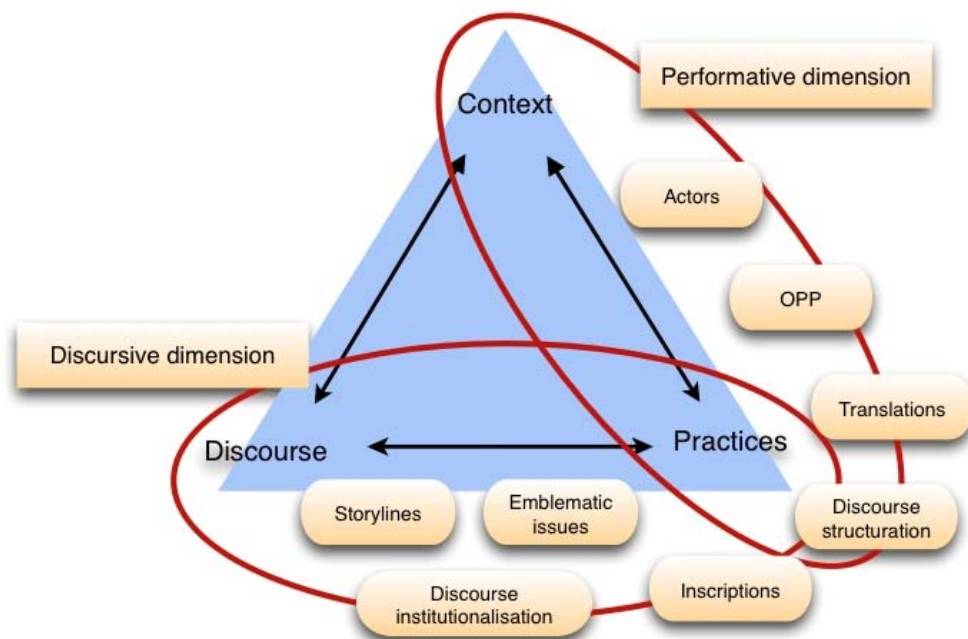


Figure 8: Overview of methodological tools of ANT and ADA

In order to describe the actors and their practices and to assess the discursive elements, the analysis of the performative and discursive dimension is guided by several research questions, each based on one or several methodological concepts of ANT and ADA:

First of all, the performative dimension is approached by asking:

- Who are the main *heterogeneous actors*, including documents, within and outside UNESCO, that influence its policy-making processes during the episode under scrutiny?
- How do particular actors establish themselves as *Obligatory Passage Points* within UNESCO's policy-making practices?
- How do actors *translate* their interests in order to achieve and stabilise their power position within the actor-network? How did these translations lead to *discourse structuration* within a group of actors or the entire organisation?
- What are the broader contextual elements that are necessary for understanding the actors' behaviour?

Other concepts allow for the discursive dimension to be approached while also touching on performative elements of the process:

- Which *emblematic issues and storylines* can be identified that dominated the organisation's discourse during the period under scrutiny? How are these emblematic issues and story lines chosen and shaped by the various actors?
- How do actors *inscribe* their interpretation of emblematic issues and storylines into documents or institutional arrangements? What is the role of organisational rules and procedures for these inscription processes?
- How do the discursive elements and translation strategies of actors lead to the *institutionalisation* of a particular discourse, which in return influence the practices within the organisation?

Instead of providing a rigid methodological frame in which all these questions need to be answered for each policy process analysed, the questions simply guide the empirical research without limiting it. The same applies to the concepts borrowed from ANT and ADA. Instead of precisely following the methodological indications given by Hajer, Latour and others, the empirical research is simply inspired by the proposed tools. Consequently, as proposed by Latour, it uses the two approaches as toolboxes from which the researcher can pick the tools he needs. In particular, Actor-Network Theory was developed for a very different kind of analysis than the one conducted in this thesis; its methodological postulations are therefore only partly applicable to the analysis of UNESCO's policy discourse.

## **4.2 Empirical proceeding and problems encountered**

In order to answer the above questions, the empirical research of this thesis was composed of four steps, each bringing different practical problems or conceptual challenges:

### **Step 1: Identifying key moments of discourse development**

The empirical research was started with a first phase of desk and archive research. The objective of this phase was to gain an overview of all information-related events and

activities that took place at UNESCO during the period under scrutiny. Based on this overview, several key moments were identified, during which the organisation reflected on the information society and the impact of digital technology.

The need to identify these key moments of discourse development, instead of considering the development of discourse over the full period under scrutiny, emerged from the methodological framework. In fact, ANT was conceptualised as a way to observe and describe the creation processes and the establishment of power relationships at a micro-level through the analysis of concrete interaction of actors at specific points in time. The same is the case for ADA since its focus on concrete linguistic utterances and processes of arguing and argumentation necessarily leads to a study of discourse creation on a micro-level, rather than to the observation of discursive developments over a long period of time.

However, the period under scrutiny in this research extends over a time span of more than a decade — from the early 1990s until 2003. It was therefore essential for the question to be solved of how to combine a focus on micro-level with a more macro perspective interested in the development of a discourse during a long but definite period. To overcome this problem, the empirical research focuses on specific moments when, through the actors' practices, the discourse shifted or changed entirely. According to ANT's objective of observing creation processes "in the making", only the moments when new actors enter the stage (either human or non-human actors, such as for instance a new staff member or a technological development) are of particular importance. It is at these points in time that new elements are added to an existing discourse or that completely new concepts and ideas have to be found and negotiated in order to adapt to the current situation. According to Latour, these are the rare moments when new networks are formed, actions are performed and new data is generated which can be described by the researcher.<sup>172</sup>

As a result, the period under scrutiny is not regarded as a line of continuous stable discursive action that can be observed from a macro perspective to detect long-term developments. Instead, the time span is considered as a sequence of moments when UNESCO's discourse either remained stable or changed. The empirical research zooms in on the moments of change to describe how, at these particular points in time, new internal or external elements are added to the network and production processes take place on a micro-level.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 31.

<sup>173</sup> Stalder proposes that a good starting point for observing changes in the Actor Networks could be new inventions or policy decisions, but also the attempt of an existing actor to grow and to include new

Once a number of potential key moments had been identified through the first phase of archive and desk research, a few exploratory interviews were conducted with key actors of the processes under scrutiny who helped to confirm and readjust the selection of key moments.<sup>174</sup> These interviews revealed insider information on the causal interrelations of policy processes and on the significance that the interviewee gave to a particular event or decision.

In the end, three episodes of policy-making were selected for the more in-depth analysis, which can be considered as the most crucial moments for UNESCO's discourse on the information society.<sup>175</sup>

## Step 2: Desk and archive research

After the selection of the key moments, the first phase of desk and archive research was complemented by a second phase of more in-depth research in the UNESCO Archives. The goal of this second phase was to find, identify and consult all records that would allow for the actors, their practices and the development of UNESCO's discourse during the three selected episodes to be traced.

According to Hajer, the ideal sources for the analysis of policy debates are video or audio recordings of debates since they enable the researcher to directly access the arguments of actors and to retrace the actual processes of arguing. However, such material allowing an exhaustive analysis was not available or accessible for the debates that had taken place at UNESCO. While audio recordings exist for the plenary sessions of UNESCO's General Conference and the Executive Board, only the official delegations of member states are authorised to access them. Moreover, smaller meetings or other meetings than those of UNESCO's governing bodies are not systematically recorded.

As a consequence, the empirical research needed to be based primarily on written documentation reflecting the argumentative exchanges. The consulted documents belonged to two different types, following the official categorisation of UNESCO:

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domains in the network, see Stalder, "Actor-Network-Theory and Communication Networks: Towards Convergence".

<sup>174</sup> Alexander Bogner and Wolfgang Menz, "The Theory-Generating Expert Interview: Epistemological Interest, Forms of Knowledge, Interaction", in *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz (Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 47.

<sup>175</sup> These episodes and the reasons for their selection are discussed in more detail in the introduction to Part III (see here page 190ff).



First of all, the research was based on UNESCO's "official documents". Official documents are all public documents issued by UNESCO's governing bodies (General Conference, Executive Board and Director-General) and the UNESCO Secretariat. They are divided into strategy documents (which determine the functioning of the organisation, including legal instruments adopted by the organisation, action plans etc.), meeting documents (all official documents prepared in connection to official meetings and events, like preparatory documents, minutes, reports etc.); programme documents (discussion papers and information material for limited distribution, for instance among experts or a professional community) and speeches and presentations. In addition, the category also comprises all publications issued and edited by the organisation.

The bulk of these documents are available in the UNESCO document database UNESDOC.<sup>176</sup> For documents and publications dated after 1972, as well as an increasing number of older items, a full-text version is also accessible via the database, where many can be found in several of UNESCO's six working languages.

Secondly, the in-depth phase of archive research was based on UNESCO's "programme or correspondence files". These records reflect the internal work processes of the organisation since they contain not only all official correspondence of the UNESCO's Secretariat and the field offices but also all other documents that are created, received or collected by the programme and administrative sectors in the course of their activities, such as letters, emails, drafts, memos, handwritten minutes or notes, input documents for official documents, and other similar items.

As a general rule, these documents are accessible in the UNESCO Archives after a closure period of 20 years from the date of the most recent item in the file. For a few exceptional records the closure period even lasts for 50 years, e.g. for files containing sensitive information about UNESCO's relations with its member states, information that could harm the organisation or its staff, and personal files of UNESCO employees. In addition, since 2004, the UNESCO Archives have collected all electronic records produced by the organisation in the course of its daily work. They are, however, not accessible to external researchers and, in any case, did not cover the period under scrutiny in this thesis.

Due to the focus of the empirical research being on work in progress rather than final output, examining only the official documents was not sufficient for analysing the

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<sup>176</sup> The web address of the UNESDOC database is <http://unesdoc.unesco.org> (last accessed 4 April 2015).

practices and arguments of actors. Consequently, the second phase of archive and desk research primarily concentrated on programme and correspondence files, most importantly those which include written protocols of debates, commented drafts and early versions of policy texts, minutes of inquiries, presentations, letters, email exchanges or similar records able to give insights into the policy-making processes.<sup>177</sup>

In relation to the period analysed in this thesis, ranging from 1990 to 2003, the consultation of programme and correspondence files was, however, complicated by several practical problems:

Regarding the official access to the archival records, most programme and correspondence files reflecting the period under scrutiny (1990-2003) still fell within the closure period of 20 years and were therefore not immediately accessible. Following UNESCO's official access rules, the access to documents that are not yet within the open consultation period can be granted in exceptional cases by the UNESCO Archives, with the agreement of the responsible unit of the UNESCO Secretariat. Upon request, several derogations were granted so as to make it possible to consult the bulk of the available records regarding the three selected episodes.

But it was the availability of programme and correspondence files, rather than their accessibility, which posed practical problems for the empirical research. In fact, at the beginning of the archive research, many of the files reflecting the period under scrutiny were not yet part of the holdings kept by the UNESCO Archives. Instead, many of them were still in the offices or local archives of the responsible programme sector. Only after the CI Sector moved to another building of the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in summer 2013, were most old documents of the sector transferred to the UNESCO Archives for official archiving, although this did not include all documents. Thanks to another derogation and the support of the sector's staff, the remaining records —mainly concerning the first and third selected episode— could be consulted within the CI Sector's offices before their transfer to the archives.<sup>178</sup>

While the majority of records reflecting the analysed episodes could eventually be retrieved, some documentation could not be found. Due to lax archiving procedures within the sector or imprecise classification, it has to be assumed that the documentation of some meetings, periods or activities had either been destroyed or archived under

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<sup>177</sup> Detailed lists of records analysed for the performative and the discursive dimensions of the three selected episodes are contained in the introductions to the respective sub-chapters of Part III.

<sup>178</sup> The bulk of these records were found by the author of this thesis, with the support and permission of the UNESCO Archives and the CI Sector, in several abandoned cupboards after the CI Sector had moved in early summer 2013.

wrong denominations, which made them untraceable among the vast holdings of the UNESCO Archives.

A final practical problem was linked to the fact that, during the 1990s, the organisation started to communicate and store files electronically, via email and local computer servers. Since UNESCO only started to systematically archive its electronic records in 2004, these early files are only available if they were printed out and stored together with all other physical documents. Luckily, this was the case for a large part of the email correspondence and many draft documents reflecting the three episodes analysed in the empirical research. In addition, some conference websites of UNESCO from the late 1990s are still online, while the first websites that the CI Sector created during the mid-1990s were recorded by the Wayback Machine of the Internet Archive, and could hence be accessed via this service.<sup>179</sup>

### **Step 3: In-depth interviews**

The in-depth archive research and document analysis was complemented by qualitative interviews with actors and observers of the three selected episodes. These interviews provided descriptive and narrative in-depth information about the selected episodes from the point of view of the interviewee. Since the interaction between researcher and interviewee provided the opportunity to move back and forth in time, reconstruct events and express feelings and descriptions about past and current developments, they were particularly suited for obtaining information on extra-discursive elements, which were not reflected in the consulted archival records and official documents. Consequently, the analysis of the interviews was not included in the discourse analysis but served to reconstruct the performative dimension and the broader context.

More precisely, in line with ANT's ambition of giving a precise account of practices and ADA's aim to analyse the processes of "arguing", the purpose of conducting interviews was threefold:

- (1) First of all, regarding the practices and interactions of actors, the objective was to obtain subjective in-depth accounts of the various policy processes, debates and the relations among involved actors;

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<sup>179</sup> The Wayback Machine (<http://archive.org/web/web.php>, last accessed 4 April 2015) is a service owned and operated by the Internet Archive, a non-profit digital library founded in 1996. With the mission of providing universal access to all knowledge and advocating for a free and open Internet, it gives free public access to collections of digitised materials, such as websites, games, music, videos, and several million public-domain books.

- (2) Secondly, regarding the creation of policy discourse, the interviews served to identify cognitive and discursive shifts that led to the reframing of issues and the introduction of new ideas and discursive elements;
- (3) Thirdly, the interviews helped to reassess the reflections deriving from the document analysis, to clarify elements regarding the identified relations between actors, and to test “if the analysis of the discursive space made sense”.<sup>180</sup>

In total, seventeen interviews were conducted between April 2013 and March 2015 (a list of all interviews, including information about the interviewees, is included in Appendix n. 1, “List of interviewees”). Twelve interviewees were former or current staff members of UNESCO, including four former Assistant Director-Generals. In addition, for each of the three episodes, interviews were conducted with one or two observers who had not worked directly for UNESCO but took part as observers in the debates marking the respective episode. Although these conversations were generally helpful for providing an outsider reflection on the observed processes, it appeared that UNESCO staff members were able to provide more insider knowledge into the internal functioning and dynamics of the organisation’s decision-making processes. Thus, no further interviews with observers were added.<sup>181</sup>

Methodologically, the design of the interviews was loosely inspired by the reflections of Bogner and Menz about interviewing experts, with the expertise of the interviewees being the insider knowledge into the functioning of UNESCO and the internal dynamics of the period under scrutiny.<sup>182</sup> Except for the few exploratory interviews, the aim was to meet the interviewee with previously acquired knowledge, deriving from the document analysis, in order to allow for an exchange, on equal footing, that involved contribution to the conversation by both interviewee and interviewer.

For this reason, the exchanges were designed as semi-structured, narrative interviews, starting with a short introduction on the research and some biographical entry question. They were always specific to the interviewee, which involved prior research about his/her person and career within UNESCO. Each interview was designed to confirm, nuance or reject the information gathered previously, without disclosing what other interviewees had said about the same process. Depending on the person, new themes and questions

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<sup>180</sup> Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 74.

<sup>181</sup> See also Ulrike Froschauer and Manfred Lueger, “Expert Interviews in Interpretive Organizational Research”, in *Interviewing Experts*, ed. Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz (Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 217-34.

<sup>182</sup> Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig, and Wolfgang Menz, *Interviewing Experts* (Houndmills; Basingstoke; Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

emerged during the interview, with interviewees telling many personal anecdotes about events, processes or actors. In addition, most interviewees were asked to propose additional actors or observers who could contribute meaningful insider knowledge.

All interviews took place in person in Paris, Geneva, Cologne and Bonn, except for two interviews which were conducted via email due to time constraints faced by the interviewees. One additional contact did not agree to a personal conversation or to answering concrete questions but sent a detailed personal account of the period under scrutiny via email, with the condition of remaining anonymous (and is therefore not counted or named among the interviewees). Only five out of the seventeen interviewees were female, which reflects the gender imbalance within UNESCO's professional staff, in particular at higher hierarchical levels, and among the professional experts involved in its work.

The interviews were conducted in either French, English or German, based on the interviewees' preferences, and some switched between different languages. The duration of the interviews was generally one or two hours, with one exceptional case that continued for more than five hours followed by another, shorter phone conversation some weeks later.

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the interviews and the possibility to disclose "off the record" information, that would not be quoted in the dissertation. This happened during almost all interviews, in particular when the interviewee disclosed personal opinions about other actors or factual information about political processes that he/she considered to be sensitive. At several instances, interviewees asked to stop the recording in order to tell personal anecdotes or subjective insider information. Due to this confidential style of most conversations, no verbatim quotes from the interviews are included in the thesis, except for some few insensitive but particularly apt expressions. Moreover, no verbatim transcripts of the interviews are included in the appendices.

In the text, references to interviews were only made when particular information was given independently by at least two interviewees and/or if the information could additionally be verified through the analysis of documents and archival records. By this means, purely subjective appraisals of situations should be avoided. In addition, this took into account the fact that most events discussed in interviews had taken place from twelve to over twenty years ago and that the interviewee's memories of factual information were therefore often vague or factually imprecise.

In general, all interviewees were very supportive of the research, interested in the insights achieved through the archival research, and content to speak about past times and

processes. Most of them offered additional support by sending documents and records kept in their personal physical or electronic archives. However, a few of the former or current UNESCO staff members who had been contacted did not reply to or declined the interview invitation.

#### **Step 4: Discourse analysis**

The last step in the empirical research consisted in the analysis of the discursive dimension. Based on the assessment of the performative elements, this analysis aimed to gain an overview of the various discursive streams that emerged during the period under scrutiny and to understand how they influenced and competed with each other. Therefore the discourse analysis followed three objectives:

- (1) Firstly, it aimed to pinpoint the ideas, concepts and notions that characterised the discursive dimension of each episode of UNESCO's policy response to the information society;
- (2) Secondly, on the basis of these ideas and concepts, it sought to identify the main emblematic issues that dominated the discourse during these particular moments in time;
- (3) Thirdly, for each emblematic issue identified, the analysis aimed to reconstruct the arguments of actors, through which they positioned themselves on the various sides of the debate, and to summarise and categorise these arguments into several competing storylines on the same issue.

Although it is described as the last step, the discourse analysis was conducted in parallel with the interviews; this allowed for the insights deriving from the discourse analysis to be verified by discussing with the interviewees whether the emblematic issues and storylines identified made sense or needed to be reassessed. In addition, the interviews allowed for a reconstruction of the exact circumstances, in which actors expressed certain opinions, in particular when these opinions were inconsistent with their usual behaviour and perspectives. According to Hajer, an argumentative discourse analysis should not be based on the assumption of coherence on the part of all actors. In fact, the utterance of a particular statement is often due to a particular setting and its meaning can be influenced by an exceptional situation. Therefore, during the analysis of the discursive dimension, detailed information about the exact conditions under which debates took place is also a necessary key to the interpretation of the discursive structures.

On the practical level, the analysis of the discursive dimension varied for each of the three episodes. While for the first episode, the analysis focused on identifying emblematic issues and competing storylines, the assessment of the second and third episodes centred much more on the exchanges among actors and their efforts to inscribe certain issues and storylines into UNESCO's programmes and international instruments. Nevertheless, they all followed the same sequence:

#### *Selection of texts and categories*

At the beginning, all documents that expressed a person's or a group's opinion as well as those which reflected discursive exchanges were carefully read in order to identify a list of topics and notions that featured prominently in these documents. Subsequently, all those documents were selected that contained relevant arguments and statements concerning the topics and notions identified. On the basis of these documents, a set of categories was inductively developed.<sup>183</sup>

#### *Coding*

The selected documents were then imported into Dedoose, a web-based software for qualitative data analysis. Once integrated, all texts were manually coded through the software interface, with the different categories corresponding to the list of categories identified at the beginning of the process. When needed, supplementary categories were added or two codes merged into a larger category. In addition, copies of handwritten texts (mostly handwritten minutes of meetings taken by UNESCO staff members), which could not be imported into Dedoose due to compatibility problems, were coded on paper.

#### *Structuring through the identification of emblematic issues and storylines*

During and after the coding, the different categories were compared in order to identify links which consisted, for example, in the same argument being used for several topics, and to regroup several sub-categories under a larger theme. Based on this comparison and re-categorisation, several emblematic issues were identified for each episode under which all other categories could be subordinated.

Subsequently, all text excerpts under the same category were exported from the software and carefully re-assessed in order to identify the most pertinent arguments and to group

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<sup>183</sup> The selection and categorisation was loosely guided by the indications on qualitative data analysis provided in Philipp Mayring, *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse. Grundlagen und Techniken* (Weinheim; Basel: Beltz Verlag, 2008), 74ff.

together similar arguments and perspectives, which were then summarised in one of multiple storylines on the same emblematic issue.

For each storyline, one or several excerpts were selected that epitomised the perspective expressed by the storyline in the best and most accurate way. All excerpts that could not be categorised as pertaining to one of the identified storylines were assessed once more in order to verify that no important additional storyline had been left out.

### *Identifying inscriptions*

Except for the first episode, in which the discourse analysis aimed to give a full overview on all emblematic issues and all possible storylines, the next step consisted in assessing how the various issues and storylines had been inscribed in institutional arrangements and instruments adopted by UNESCO's member states. Therefore, the various drafts and the final versions of the respective official texts were manually analysed in order to identify where and how the issues and storylines were successfully inscribed or left out.

### *Interpretation*

The last step of the discourse analysis consisted in a short interpretation of the emblematic issues, in particular regarding the larger “problématique” or complex of problems for which they stand in an emblematic manner. However, since the identified storylines and their explanation were already revealing with regard to the various facets of the competing discourses, there was little need for additional interpretation.

Unlike the previous steps of the empirical research, no practical problems were encountered during the discourse analysis, except for the need to master an important amount of documents and texts to be screened, selected and coded. Considering the three episodes as a whole, more than 200 documents were manually coded within Dedoose, ranging in length from 0.5 to 40 pages. In total, the coding resulted in more than 900 text excerpts, categorised by 25 different codes. In addition, many handwritten documents, of a length ranging from 7 to 28 pages, were coded manually since their format could not be imported into Dedoose.

The bulk of the documents used for the discourse analysis could only be accessed thanks to a derogation granted by the UNESCO Archives and the CI Sector since they did still fall under the closure period of 20 years. Therefore, and due to the vast amount of coded texts, the thesis' appendices only includes a few selected documents for each episode, which nonetheless give an idea of the nature of the exchanges and the analysed discourses (Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”).



## Conclusion

There are many ways in which the development of a policy position by an international organisation, such as UNESCO, can be analysed from a social science perspective. In recent years, scholars of International Relations, Public Administration or Organisational Sociology have analysed international organisations by assessing their organisational structures, institutional designs, autonomies, bureaucratic practices, administrative styles, outputs, behaviours, preferences, cultures, or normative orientations. Considering these organisations as autonomous actors in their own right, the authors thereby opposed the common scholarly interest which reduces international organisations to just stages of governmental interaction.<sup>184</sup> With this move, they tried to leave behind the tendency to treat the interior of international organisations as a black box whose internal dynamics are not interesting for the study of its performance and role in global governance.<sup>185</sup>

With a similar overarching ambition but different research objectives and methodological interests, some scholars also approached international organisations and their internal policy-making dynamics from an anthropological perspective. Less concerned with the performance of the organisation or its role in the global network of power and geopolitics, these anthropological studies tried to understand the practices and relationships within an organisation through participatory observation and by progressively uncovering the habits and behavioural logics of the actors working in the organisation.<sup>186</sup>

This thesis shares elements of both these streams and therefore takes a similar, though different approach. It equally tries to open the black box of policy-making within an international organisation and to understand its internal dynamics and the practices of actors by studying them with an almost ethnographical interest. However, the centre of attention is neither the organisation's role in any kind of global order, nor the habits of actors. Instead, all analysis is led by the focus on discourse and the creation of discourse through the meaning-making capacities of actors involved in policy-making. These actors and their interactions, as well as the organisation as a whole, are seen through the lens of this particular interest and therefore only taken into consideration as far as they have any kind of influence on the discourse itself.

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<sup>184</sup> Jarle Trondal et al., *Unpacking International Organisations: The Dynamics of Compound Bureaucracies European Policy Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 21.

<sup>185</sup> David C. Ellis, "The Organizational Turn in International Organization Theory", *Journal of International Organizations Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010): 19.

<sup>186</sup> Marc Abélès, ed., *Des anthropologues à l'OMC* (Paris: CNRS, 2011), 20ff; Phillip Rousseau, "Les cultures fragiles. L'UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)", 87ff.

The focus on discourse draws on the reflections of Fischer and Forester and their belief that, more than anything else, it is the language used in policy debates that defines the conceptualisation of policy problems and their solutions. Loosely inspired by poststructuralist perspectives on policy studies and International Relations, the conceptual and epistemic approach of this thesis does, however, go beyond an interest solely in language and linguistic utterances. In addition to the content and meaning of discourse, it is also interested in how the discourse is shaped through the practices of actors and the concrete settings in which these practices take place. Furthermore, it also accounts for the interests of actors as well as the role of institutions and context for shaping the policy discourse. Consequently, the thesis applies a broadened understanding of discourse, which focuses just as much on the “hors-texte” than on the text itself.

For this reason, the theoretical and methodological framework of the thesis is not solely based on discourse analytical methods, but instead, complements them with another constructivist approach, commonly used for the study of knowledge creation in science and technology. Indeed, it combines concepts and ideas of Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA), as developed by Marteen Hajer and others, with certain concepts and tools of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), in particular those shaped by Bruno Latour. Their alliance allows for an analysis of both arguments and discourses —that is the discursive dimension— and the processes of arguing and the actors involved in these arguments — referred to as the performative dimension of policy discourse. While ADA is used to assess the discourse that emerges from the exchanges of actors and the policy debates through which they position themselves on the different sides of the discourse production, ANT-concepts can be used to retrace the actors’ practices and to give a precise account of the policy-making process and the context that is relevant for the understanding of the discourse and its creation.

The methodological approach is particularly inspired by some of ANT’s methodological postulations, such as the idea that non-human actors can also have and grant agency, which allows for the inclusion of technological developments as well as the role of documents as units of analysis. As long as they have a traceable influence on the discourse and its creation process within UNESCO, these elements “act” upon the other (human) actors and therefore also need to be considered as actors.

However, just as the conceptual and epistemological framework of the thesis does not fully subscribe to all poststructuralists assumptions about knowledge and reality, the underlying methodological reflections are not fully aligned with ANT, in particular regarding its conceptualisation of power. Instead, it follows Foucault’s idea of power, which claims that structural power relations exist but need to be enacted and can be

observed only in their concrete empirical setting. In contrast to this, ANT entirely denies the existence of overarching power structures and only recognises the creation of power relations on the micro-level through interaction. For this reason, one of the methodological challenges of this thesis consists in testing whether it is possible to follow ANT's postulations with regard to power and to describe the creation of discourse within UNESCO without referring to any overarching power structures or any kind of *a priori* knowledge about the relationship of actors.

On the empirical level, the research of this thesis addresses the discursive and performative dimensions through a combination of different methods, ranging from archive and desk research to semi-structured, narrative interviews and discourse analysis. The main difficulties encountered during the empirical research were related to the availability of archival sources, which had either been lost or were not publicly accessible due to UNESCO's archival policies. Despite this, it was eventually possible for a large number of records to be consulted in order to complement and support the information deriving from the interviews, and vice-versa. In combination with the discourse analytical assessment of all texts and documents reflecting the discursive struggles during the period under scrutiny, these records allowed for the three selected key episodes of UNESCO's policy response to the information society to be retraced.



# PART III:

## UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society (1990-2003)

### Introduction

In February 1990, UNESCO's Director-General Federico Mayor, who had only been elected three years earlier, distributed a "Green Note" in which he announced a long list of structural, functional and managerial changes to be implemented by the UNESCO Secretariat.<sup>1</sup> Besides an important number of promotions and staff transfers to field offices, this Green Note proposed the restructuration of the entire Secretariat. In this context, it also mandated the creation of an independent sector for the field of communication, which had previously been grouped together with UNESCO's cultural programmes within a common Sector for Culture and Communication. The creation of the new sector did not represent an innovation *per se*, as separate institutional structures for communication had existed since UNESCO's inception.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the novelty consisted in grouping together not only communication but also all information and informatics programmes within a common structure, accordingly named the Sector for

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<sup>1</sup> This Green Note (DG/Note/90/2) dated 28 February 1990 has been described as proposing the longest list of decisions ever to be brought together in a single document in the history of UNESCO ("une note verte, c'est à dire une note signée par le Directeur général, qui proposait la plus longue liste de décisions jamais réunies dans un seul texte dans l'histoire de l'organisation", see Yves Courrier, *L'Unesco sans peine*, 354). A Green Note is a document signed by the Director-General and addressed to the entire staff which mostly concerns different kinds of decisions related to the functioning of the organisation. Until the election of Mayor's successor, Koïchiro Matsuura, in 1990, the name of these documents derived from the green paper they were printed on. It was subsequently changed to Blue Notes and later, after the election of Irina Bokova in 2009, to Ivory Notes. They are available online: [http://www.unesco.org/ulis/administrative/index\\_en.html](http://www.unesco.org/ulis/administrative/index_en.html) (last accessed 1 October 2015).

<sup>2</sup> The Department of Mass Communication, which had been created in 1946, was transformed into a Sector for Communication in 1967. For a few years, this sector also grouped together the various programmes dealing with documentation, libraries and archives. However at the beginning of the NWICO debates, these programmes had been moved into a central administrative sector, while the divisions dealing with communication and media were merged with the Culture Sector. A historical overview of the organisational arrangements for communication and information within UNESCO is included in Appendix n. 2, "Organisational setting for Communication and Information within UNESCO".

Communication, Information and Informatics (CII). The Director-General justified this merge by the increasing convergence caused by digital technology:

“I am also aware that it is no longer possible to anticipate the development of communication needs and opportunities without taking account of the new information technologies. The convergence of information and communication technologies has become a key factor in social change, indeed in social development. The need for a focal point where questions in the fields of information and communication can be discussed together is becoming ever more apparent, both in the Secretariat and to our international partners. This is why I have decided to bring together, in the same sector, programmes which have until now been operating in parallel, so as to encourage the development of convergent approaches and mutually reinforcing action on their part.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the Green Note announced the appointment of a new Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information (ADG/CII), the Lithuanian Henrikas Yushkiavitshus. Just a few years after the NWICO debate caused the biggest crisis UNESCO had ever encountered, the decision to recruit a representative of a formerly communist country as head of the Communication Sector might have come as a surprise. The breakup of the soviet bloc and the new spirit of joint efforts that had been emphasised in the New Communication Strategy of 1989 (and thus just a few months before the DG note) might only partially have justified this decision. Besides the usual governmental lobbying that commonly precedes the appointment of high-level positions within the United Nations, it can be assumed that Mayor did not shy away from the political provocation which the appointment might have been perceived as. Instead, he recognised the strong management competences of the new ADG<sup>4</sup>, who had formerly been the chairman of the USSR Interministerial Committee for Radio and Television Development. In this function, Yushkiavitshus had, among other tasks, been in charge of the television and radio coverage of the Moscow Olympic Games and the USSR space programme. He was thus also well-known and recognised among media specialists and policy-makers outside of the USSR. He especially had the strong support of American media actors, such as CNN founder Ted Turner, who had successfully cooperated with him in the past and defended his appointment against all polemics.<sup>5</sup>

And as a matter of fact, the controversial appointment paid off during the following decade as it was under Yushkiavitshus' leadership that UNESCO developed some of the

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO, “Reforms with a view to implementing the new Medium-Term Plan adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-fifth session”, DG/Note/90/2, 28 February 1990, 35f, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002189/218944eo.pdf> (last accessed 1 September 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Jane Wright, Personal interview, 11 September 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Alain Modoux, Personal interview, 26 November 2014; Françoise Rivière, Personal interview, 9 March 2015; Henrikas Yushkiavitshus, Personal interview, 23 February 2015.

most innovative —and provocative— ideas about the role and value of information in society, which, in an alleviated form, still characterise the organisation’s discourse until now. Able to count on the support of media players from both the former East and the West, the new ADG did not balk at the diplomatic and internal tensions that some of these positions evoked. This allowed him to prepare, within the CII Sector, the space for his staff to search, test, discuss, abandon and retain new ideas in order to formulate a coherent policy discourse regarding the societal challenges provoked by digital technology.

As developed in the methodological and conceptual chapter, the creation of UNESCO’s policy discourse is not analysed in this thesis as a line of continuous stable discursive action, which could be observed from a macro-perspective in order to describe long-term development. Instead, the creation process is considered as a sequence of momentums in which UNESCO’s dominant discourse either remained stable or changed. Hence, the empirical research zooms in on the most important moments of change in order to “describe” —in ANT tradition<sup>6</sup> — how, at these particular points in time, new internal or external elements were added to the discursive network, how power relations were established and how the processes of discourse creation took place on a micro-level.

For the period under scrutiny, it is possible to identify three of these important momentums of change on the basis of which UNESCO’s creation of a policy discourse on the information society can be studied. None of them correspond to a single event taking place at a certain moment of time. Instead, these momentums correspond to particular policy processes spanning a longer period, which are often defined by a series of events or smaller processes. Therefore, these major momentums are not referred to as “episodes” since all three of them represent separate, yet interrelated, episodes of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society:

- (1) The first episode analysed in the empirical research focuses on several elements that had taken place between 1994 and 2000 all serving the same purpose, namely to brainstorm on the implications of the Internet and the information society for UNESCO’s fields of mandate, and to define first positions and strategies concerning these new challenges. The largest part of this brainstorming exercise was conducted during a series of meetings on the topic of information ethics that UNESCO organised between 1997 and 2000. During these *INFOethics conferences*, UNESCO

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<sup>6</sup> Recall that the term “describe” is deliberately chosen as reference to the methodological framework, in particular to the use of certain methodological tools deriving from Actor-Network Theory.

brought together a number of selected experts to discuss and reflect on the ethical problems arising from the technological development. Therefore, we can describe this first episode as *UNESCO's search for ideas and values pertaining to the information society*.

- (2) The second episode retraced a policy process that had started in 1996 and ended with the creation of a new intergovernmental programme in 2001. Acknowledging the increasing convergence of communication and information technologies and their usage, UNESCO decided to merge its long-established programmes dealing with information and informatics (PGI and IIP) into a new programme more adapted to respond to the challenges of the information society. Through this *Information for All Programme (IFAP)*, and based on the ideas developed during the previous episode, the organisation tried to find an institutional response to the information society. Thus, this episode can be described as *UNESCO's search for an institutional frame for its response to the information society*.
- (3) The third and final episode analysed in the empirical research concerns a policy process that started in 1997 and cumulated in the *Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace* adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in November 2003. Retracing the recommendation's difficult and contentious process of preparation, negotiation and adoption, the description of this episode focuses on UNESCO's efforts to inscribe the ethical values and positions on the information society developed during the previous episodes into a non-binding international instrument. Therefore, this episode can be described as *UNESCO's search for a global consensus on the information society*.

It would be possible to identify other elements that contributed to UNESCO's position on the information society and that are not directly related to these three episodes. But looking at the entire period under scrutiny from a discourse analytical perspective, it appears that all major emblematic issues, storylines and arguments that dominated the policy discourse on the information society were developed and discussed in the context of these three episodes.



In addition, the selection of these three episodes is further justified by the fact that each of them illustrates different functions<sup>7</sup> that UNESCO tried to fulfil in order to comply with its mandate:

- During the first episode, the brainstorming and exchange among experts during the INFOethics conferences, contributed to UNESCO's function both as a "laboratory of ideas" and as a "clearing house".
- In the second episode, via the new intergovernmental programme focusing on training and connecting information professionals and users, UNESCO aimed at fulfilling its functions as a "capacity builder in member states" and as a "catalyst for international cooperation".
- And finally the last episode, the preparation of an intergovernmental legal instrument on cyberspace, complied with the function of "standard-setter".

By representing these different functions, the selected episodes not only allow for the creation of UNESCO's policy discourse to be observed on a micro-level. They also make it possible to analyse how the organisation, through its different responses to the challenges of the new digital technologies, found different institutional replies to the same key challenge it was confronted with in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely the information society.

The analysis of the three identified episodes was guided by the methodological and conceptual framework developed for this thesis and is, therefore, based on a number of methodological guidelines:

First of all, the research is a combination of two different analyses: On the one hand, it scrutinises the practices, confrontations, and agreements about competing solutions and beliefs that lead to the formation of a policy discourse. This creation process is referred to as the performative dimension of the analysis. On the other hand, the research analyses the policy discourse itself, which includes the language, arguments, ideas and frames and all other elements that build the content of discourse and shape its form. This is referred to as the discursive dimension of the analysis.

But while it is useful to divide the analysis into its performative and its discursive dimension, it is not possible to separate fully the discourse from the practices and the actors or vice-versa. All elements are interconnected and continuously influence one

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<sup>7</sup> Recall that, according to its mandate, UNESCO has to fulfil five main functions: laboratory of ideas, standard setter, catalyst of international cooperation, clearing house and capacity builder for member states. The description of these functions is included in Part I (see here page 32ff).

another. As a consequence, the following empirical chapters do not simply describe the performative and discourse dimension as two separate fields of analysis. Instead, each chapter starts with a short introduction to the relevant context, followed by the description of the different processes and actors (including documents) involved in the episode under scrutiny. While discursive elements that are important for understanding this dimension are already mentioned in its description, it is in the last sub-chapter of each episode that the focus is set exclusively on the analysis of the policy discourse.

## **1. “Where is our place in cyberspace?” UNESCO’s search for ideas and values pertaining to the information society<sup>8</sup>**

*“Eine UNESCO, in der nicht mehr um Ideen gestritten wird, verdiente ihren Namen nicht.”<sup>9</sup>*

Following the development of UNESCO’s position on new challenges triggered by the arrival and pervasive spread of digital technology and networks on the global level, this chapter describes the first episode of UNESCO’s response to the information society. All efforts undertaken by the organisation during this early period focused on discussing the consequences that the technological changes would bring for the various fields of its mandate and on trying to identify its own role within this altered environment. In this context, the organisation soon decided to focus on ethical and societal aspects of the information society, rather than on economic or technological ones. Therefore this first episode is described as UNESCO’s search for ideas and values that should guide its response to the information society.

It is not only the earliest episode but also the one that laid the foundation for the other two episodes: during this early phase, several actors introduced new ideas that started to structure the discourse of the entire organisation. Based on this discourse structuration — described by Hajer as the first stage in the creation of a dominant policy discourse<sup>10</sup>— the

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<sup>8</sup> “Where is our place in cyberspace?” was the name of a meeting with the permanent delegates of UNESCO’s member states organised by the UNESCO Secretariat in November 1998 to discuss the organisation’s position on the Internet and the information society.

<sup>9</sup> Gehlhoff, “Krise und Wandel der UNESCO”, 565.

<sup>10</sup> Marteen Hajer, “Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning”, 71.

second and third episodes reflected UNESCO's efforts to institutionalise some of these ideas by inscribing them into institutional structures or international legal instruments.

UNESCO's search for values and ideas did not, however, take place in an empty space. In fact, it was strongly influenced by the technological development as well as by the general policy debate about ICTs at that time. Therefore, the chapter starts with a detailed analysis of the *context of the episode under scrutiny*. It introduces the general context consisting in the growing commercialisation of the Internet and related discussions on information superhighways; it illustrates how UNESCO did not only pick up the topic of the information highways but eventually replaced it with a focus on information ethics, influenced by UNESCO's overarching priority given to universal ethics.

In its second part, the chapter moves on to describe the *performative dimension of this episode*, composed of a number of events that had taken place between 1994 and 2000. All of them served the purpose of defining the first positions and strategies concerning the new challenges caused by digital technology and the information society. The largest input to UNESCO's search for ideas and values pertaining to the information society was provided by a series of conferences organised between 1997 and 2000 that dealt with different topics linked to the broad theme of information ethics. By fostering a critical exchange on global ethical values in the information society, this INFOethics conference series can be counted among UNESCO's most important contributions to international debates about the challenges and chances of digital technology and is therefore the focus of the performative analysis.<sup>11</sup>

In its last part, the chapter scrutinises the *discursive dimension of this first episode* of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society. It categorises the various streams of discussions and the diverse ideas about UNESCO's role in the digital age by ascribing them to three different emblematic issues: information ethics, the public domain and the information gap. In addition, the presentation of the discursive dimension identifies several competing storylines for each emblematic issue, allowing for all opinions expressed during this early episode to be accounted for. Therefore, they fulfil the overall objective of this chapter which is to retrace *how* UNESCO proceeded in searching for and identifying those ideas and positions that allowed for formulating a first convincing policy position on the information society.

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<sup>11</sup> A journal article about the conference series, linking it to more recent UNESCO initiatives regarding information ethics, was published in 2015 in a special issue on ethics in the information society. See Julia Pohle, "UNESCO and INFOethics: Seeking Global Ethical Values in the Information Society", *Telematics and Informatics* 32 (2015): 381-90.

## 1.1 Understanding the context: UNESCO entering the Information Highways

In order to understand the broader historical background of the period in which UNESCO started to reflect on the consequences digital technology and their pervasive spread could have for its own mandate, this contextual sub-chapter introduces a number of different, partly interrelated aspects that all played an influential role:

First of all, regarding the *general context*, UNESCO's early policy discourse was clearly influenced by both the technological and commercial development of the Internet as well as the policy debate about information superhighways that, after being launched by the United States in 1993, led to the privatisation and deregulation of telecommunication markets in most developed countries and in an important number of countries in the developing world.

Against this background, the *thematic context* of this first chapter is particularly interesting as it explains why UNESCO —within this general context of commercialisation of all Internet-related services— decided to focus on other aspects of the information society than the economic and technological ones. It therefore describes the new CII Sector's brainstorming on a first strategy and position statement with regard to the information highways, which eventually resulted in giving priority to ethical questions and societal challenges.

This shift to ethical problems was clearly influenced by the *institutional context*, consisting in a number of programmes and activities relating to universal ethics that UNESCO initiated during the 1990s. As part of the overall strategy of the then Director-General, which was to foster a “culture of peace” based on moral responsibility and global solidarity, these various initiatives all shared a number of characteristics, many of which were particularly influential for UNESCO's approach to information ethics. They therefore constitute the last contextual element for the episode under scrutiny in this chapter.

### General context: The policy debate on information highways

In 1989, a few years after the political tensions caused by the NWICO movement and the subsequent withdrawal of the United States, UNESCO's General Conference adopted a New Communication Strategy, aiming to leave the conflicts of the past behind it. Part of this new strategy was the request that the organisation should study the “economic and socio-cultural impact of the new communication technologies”.<sup>12</sup> But it was only five

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<sup>12</sup> UNESCO, “Communication in the Service of Humanity”, Medium-Term Plan for 1990-1995, 25 C/Resolutions, Resolution 104 adopted on 15 November 1989 (UNESDOC). The background of

years later that the organisation actually started to reflect on this impact in a systematic way — five years in which the landscape of information and communication had undergone dramatic changes; it was precisely during these years that the Internet progressed from being a network for the technical, scientific and academic community in highly industrialised countries to a new commercial mass medium with global reach. As a result, the international debate on communication and information issues had also headed in a new direction, away from the struggles around global inequalities with regard to media and towards digital technologies and the Internet promising borderless access and unrestricted circulation of information.

In addition, also within UNESCO, the early 1990s brought several changes to the organisation's activities and programmes in the fields of information and communication: not only did the organisation now have a Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics (CII); in addition, it was led by a recently recruited Assistant Director-General (ADG/CII), Henrikas Yushkiavitshus, who had not been involved in the NWICO episode and therefore brought a breath of fresh air to the new sector.

In order to understand this general context and historical moment in which the organisation started to reflect on the new digital technology, it is necessary to look at these three elements of change that had occurred since the adoption of UNESCO's New Communication Strategy:

- (1) the Internet's spread as a commercial mass medium with global reach;
- (2) national and international initiatives triggered by this technological and economic development, represented by the policy debate on information highways;
- (3) the first initiatives launched by the new ADG/CII for discussing UNESCO's role regarding the information infrastructures.

According to ANT-tradition, all three elements can be considered as new "actors" entering the Actor-Network under scrutiny in this thesis and, therefore, represent the starting point of its observation.

The first element that fundamentally altered the context of international debates on communication and information issues was linked to the technological and economic development of digital infrastructures. Within only a few years, this development transformed the Internet from a network for technical, scientific and academic purposes, still with a limited reach within highly industrialised countries, into a mass medium

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UNESCO's New Communication Strategy is discussed in the historical chapter 2 of Part I (see here page 62ff).

offering commercial services on a global scale. Without going into detail about the history of the Internet<sup>13</sup>, it is possible to state that this development started in 1989, when the British computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee invented the hypertext mark-up language HTML together with colleagues at CERN, the Geneva-based European Organisation for Nuclear Research and the biggest Internet node in Europe at that time. With this shared format that could turn composed hypertext documents into visible websites, Berners-Lee and his colleagues prepared the way for the first version of a World-Wide Web (WWW) and added an ease-of-use interface to the Internet through which information could be organised and accessed in a user-friendly manner. In the following years, the Internet, which in its early period had been a non-commercial—or even anti-commercial—space, was opened up to privatisation, trade and economic services.<sup>14</sup> After the invention of the WWW, it soon became permitted for commercial offers to be published and financial transaction to be made over the Internet. In addition, newly founded commercial Internet Service Providers (ISPs) entered the deregulated market, making it possible to connect an increasing number of households and companies to the network. At the same time, the spread of proprietary web software, such as the Netscape Navigator, marked the beginning of a new commercial industry for Internet services, which quickly attracted new investors and users. As a result, the Internet suddenly became a mass medium, and this not only for communication and information exchange but also for commerce.<sup>15</sup> With this important element entering the global communication landscape, UNESCO had no option but to pay more attention to the societal and cultural impact digital infrastructures and their services could have.

In addition to the technological advancements, a second element contributed to initiating UNESCO's reflection on the impact of information infrastructures, namely the national and international policy debates about the "information superhighways". Many trace the beginning of this political debate back to September 1993, when the US government

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<sup>13</sup> There is an endless amount of scholarly and popular literature and chronicles about the history of the Internet and the WWW. To name only a selected few: Janet Abbate, *Inventing the Internet* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); James Gillies and Robert Cailliau, *How the Web Was Born: The Story of the World Wide Web* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); John Naughton, *A Brief History of the Future: The Origins of the Internet* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999). This thesis mostly refers to historical accounts included in Internet Governance literature that link the development of the technical infrastructure to the history of its governance mechanisms, for example Milton Mueller, *Ruling the Root: Internet Governance and the Taming of Cyberspace* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Jonathan Zittrain, *The Future of the Internet — And How to Stop It* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> The commercialisation process and economic logic of the Internet has equally been discussed by many scholars, for instance recently by Robert W. McChesney, *Digital Disconnect: How Capitalism Is Turning the Internet Against Democracy* (New York: The New Press, 2013); John Bellamy Foster and Robert W. McChesney, "The Internet's Unholy Marriage to Capitalism", *Monthly Review* (March 2011).

<sup>15</sup> Mueller, *Ruling the Root*, 107.

released an Agenda for Action calling for a National Information Infrastructure (NII).<sup>16</sup> The report was mainly drafted by then Vice-President Al Gore, who is often described as the first political leader to recognise the importance of the Internet and to promote its development<sup>17</sup>; it announced the creation of a “nationwide information superhighway”, that would primarily be built by private industry, fostered by increased competition and the rapid development of new technologies via public-private partnerships.

The NII was part of the Clinton-Gore administration’s overarching strategy to restore the US’s technological and economic leadership by investing in information infrastructures and by promoting deregulation of both national and international telecommunication markets. Therefore, the national policy plan was soon expanded to a global scale. In March 1994, Al Gore gave his famous speech, during ITU’s first World Telecommunication Development Conference, in which he proposed the creation of a Global Information Infrastructure (GII) and thereby launched the international policy debate on the matter. Instead of connecting people on just the national level, the GII was envisioned to circle the globe with information highways and allow all people to communicate and share information.<sup>18</sup>

The particularity of Gore’s plan was not, however, the vision of worldwide digital connectivity, but the idea that it should be made possible through deregulation, privatisation and the subsequent cooperation between public service institutions and telecommunication corporations:

“[T]he Information Super Highway is not only a technological project, but also an initiative that links governments and major communication corporations at the highest levels. Perhaps one of the strongest indications of this unification of State and corporate power is the seeming [*sic*] almost single-handed ability of US Vice President Gore to capture the imagination of those thinking about new communication technologies and to map out the possibilities for the new technologies at home and abroad.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> United States, *The National Information Infrastructure: Agenda for Action*.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Kahn and Vint Cerf, “Al Gore and the Internet”, *The Register*, 2 October 2000, [http://www.theregister.co.uk/2000/10/02/net\\_builders\\_kahn\\_cerf\\_recognise/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2000/10/02/net_builders_kahn_cerf_recognise/) (last accessed 3 April 2015).

<sup>18</sup> ITU, “Inauguration of the First World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTCD-94)”, Remarks prepared for delivery by Al Gore, U.S. Vice-President, Buenos Aires, 21 March 1994, [http://www.itu.int/dms\\_pub/itu-s/oth/02/01/S02010000414E05PDFE.PDF](http://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/oth/02/01/S02010000414E05PDFE.PDF) (last accessed 3 April 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Richard C. Vincent, “The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) in the Context of the Information Super-Highway”, in *Democratizing Communication? Comparative Perspectives on Information and Power*, ed. Mashoed Bailie and Dwayne Roy Winseck (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1997), 11.

Outlining the bright economic future that the GII could bring, Al Gore called upon all nations to establish national agendas based on a number of basic principles, ranging from the encouragement of private sector investment and increased competition to creating flexible regulatory environments.

The impact of this speech on UNESCO was immediate: while the subject of the information highways had come up in UNESCO's governing bodies in earlier years, it was in April 1994 —only one month after Al Gore's speech— that the organisation set up a working group to discuss the organisation's role in the new technological environment, whose meeting reports are full of references to the GII and other elements mentioned during the ITU conference.<sup>20</sup> Most importantly, UNESCO picked up, amongst Al Gore's ideas, on those most closely related to its own mandate, such as the creation of a "Global Digital Library", formed through the interconnection of "every school and library in every country", which would allow all students and scholars to access all available information from everywhere.

This working group, which constitutes the third and last element of change marking the beginning of UNESCO's reflection on the information society was created by the new ADG Yushkiavitshus —or "Yush" as he was informally called by his staff— in order to prepare the first Medium-Term Strategy of the new CII Sector. From its early years, UNESCO had been planning its activities in periods of biennia, reaching from a General Conference to the next. But, in 1976, to assure a more long-term strategic vision for each sector, UNESCO started to additionally prepare Medium-Term Strategies that span a period of three biennia and are adopted every six years by the General Conference.<sup>21</sup> This six-year rhythm of its programme planning can also explain the delay between the creation of the CII Sector in 1990 and the beginning of UNESCO's conceptual work on the information society four years later: since it was in 1989 —one year *before* the creation of the CII Sector— that the organisation had adopted its New Communication Strategy covering the period from 1990 to 1995, the earliest opportunity to shape the strategic planning of the new sector was the drafting of the strategy for 1996-2001.

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<sup>20</sup> UNESCO, "CII Working Group on the Medium-Term Plan (1996–2001). Synthesis of the First Meeting", CII/UCE 15/04/1994, 12 April 1994, (UA: CI/INF/198).

<sup>21</sup> Manuel Haag, "Die Mittelfristige Strategie. Funktion des zentralen Planungsinstrumentes der UNESCO", ed. Sabine von Schorlemer, *Beiträge des UNESCO-Lehrstuhls für Internationale Beziehungen* 4 (2013), <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:bsz:14-qucosa-129304> (last accessed 15 April 2015). Since 2000, the preparation of these strategies —fixed in the so-called C/4 documents— has been streamlined by UNESCO's Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP) which serves as some kind of think tank for the Director-General and consequently has significant influence on the conceptual planning of each programme sector.



In order to do so, the CII Working Group on the Medium-Term Plan (1996-2001) met for five half-day brainstorming sessions in spring 1994 with the mandate to develop a “conceptual basis for UNESCO’s strategy in CII fields” and discuss UNESCO’s role regarding the information superhighways.<sup>22</sup> This role should not only be that of a passive observer responding to the technological development’s impact. Instead, as UNESCO’s member states claimed, the organisation should contribute to shaping it:

“[L]’Organisation ne peut se contenter d’être à l’avant-garde des autoroutes de l’information, mais [...] elle doit aussi étudier les effets de tous ordres qui peuvent résulter de cette innovation, ajoutant qu’elle ne doit pas non plus se limiter au rôle d’observateur, mais qu’elle a aussi un rôle créatif à jouer.”<sup>23</sup>

To assure the balance between the new sector’s different priorities, the Working Group on CII’s first Medium-Term Plan included, for the first time, staff members of all three recently grouped fields (information, communication and informatics). In addition, it collected written contributions from additional staff members, from both UNESCO’s Headquarters in Paris and its field offices.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, it represented the new sector’s first collective effort for developing a common perspective on the role of ICTs in all fields of CII’s competences. At the same time, it definitely marked the beginning of the organisation’s systematic reflection on the consequences of the new information and communication technologies and its own role in the digital age.

### **Thematic context: From information highways to information ethics**

The issues identified by this first brainstorming group and the role it proposed for the CII Sector are interesting for the research presented in this thesis since they set the agenda for UNESCO’s action regarding digital information for the following six years. In addition, the group actually defined the path for the organisation’s position on the information society in general and outlined priorities for CII’s information programme, which continue to mark the sector’s activities until today. During the group’s reflection and debates about the information highways, it evaluated different scenarios for UNESCO’s role in the new information landscape. It identified three main missions for the organisation:

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<sup>22</sup> UNESCO, “Report of the CII Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO (1996-2001)”, 31 May 1994 (UA: CI/INF/198).

<sup>23</sup> UNESCO, “Summary records”, 145 EX/SR.1-18 (4), 3 February 1995, 91 (UNESDOC).

<sup>24</sup> While most documents of the Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy are available in the UNESCO Archives, only few written contributions have been preserved.

- (1) First, to take on an intellectual leadership role with regard to the information highways' implications for society and development. This role focused in particular on the domination of cultural and linguistic patterns through the content of the transmitted information and the unequal distribution of universal access through the restricted dissemination of valuable information;
- (2) Secondly, to foster capacity building and development of human resources in the field of digital technology and information through education and training;
- (3) And lastly, to formulate policies on an international and national level, in particular conventions on intellectual property rights as well as on ethical and other regulatory issues (e.g. privacy and information security).<sup>25</sup>

In the end, not all of these missions and barely any mention of the information highways were included into CII's Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001, adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1995.<sup>26</sup> Instead, the strategy document reaffirmed the programmatic direction inscribed in the New Communication Strategy in 1989, which was taken after the NWICO crisis and the withdrawal of the United States and therefore consisted in the reconfirmation of the Free Flow as the main guiding principle and a new focus on the development of communication. But despite this limited reflection of the working group's ideas in the final document, the output of its four brainstorming sessions continued to circulate and was eventually included in other official documents produced by the CII Sector that year and in following years.

As a matter of fact, to a much greater extent than the six-year strategy adopted by the 28<sup>th</sup> General Conference in 1995, the document that most clearly bears traces of the working group's ideas was a text which eventually came to be known as UNESCO's first official position statement regarding the information society. While the purpose of the Medium-Term Strategy was to coordinate UNESCO's programme activities internally, this position statement was to present its perspective to the member states and the outside world. Based on the Working Group's brainstorming exercise, an orientation document with the initial title "Draft Position Paper on the Information Highway" was prepared and

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<sup>25</sup> UNESCO, "Report of the CII Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy of UNESCO (1996-2001)", 31 May 1994 (UA: CI/INF/198).

<sup>26</sup> "Promoting the Free Flow of Information and the development of communication" in UNESCO, "Medium-Term Strategy 1995-2001", 28 C/4 Approved, 1996, § 139-153 (UNESDOC). For a detailed report about the debates on new communication technologies during UNESCO's 28<sup>th</sup> General Conference, see Dieter Offenhäusser, "Die rasante Entwicklung der Informationsmedien stellt die UNESCO vor neue Aufgaben. Bericht von der 28. UNESCO-Generalkonferenz, November 1995", *UNESCO Heute* 1 (1996): 69-74.

discussed, in September 1994, during a joint bureau meeting of CII's three intergovernmental programmes (IPDC, PGI and IIP).<sup>27</sup> In addition, the meeting was attended by the professional associations that these programmes were working with most closely, namely the International Council of Archives (ICA), the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA).<sup>28</sup>

Eventually the draft statement was submitted as input document for a joint meeting of all programme commissions regarding the "Educational, Scientific and Cultural challenges of the new Information and Communication Technologies", held during the General Conference in November 1995. These programme commissions are a subsidiary mechanism of the General Conference and the Executive Board. They are in charge of discussing all programme-related questions in a series of meetings attended by representatives of member states and accredited NGOs. They usually finish their work by submitting a number of draft resolutions that are subsequently discussed and adopted by the plenary.<sup>29</sup> Issues of particular importance for all of UNESCO's programme sectors are commonly discussed during joint meetings of the programme commissions, such as the organisation's first official position statement on the information highways. After the integration of all comments made by delegates during this meeting, the final position statement was published in May 1996 under the title "UNESCO and an Information Society for All".<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the Medium-Term Strategy, which was entirely drafted by the Secretariat and amended during debates of UNESCO's governing bodies, the position statement resulted from the collective work of the CII staff, the council members of all three intergovernmental programmes and delegations of UNESCO's member states. The text consequently represented a joint effort by all UNESCO's constituencies and, thus, constituted a first synthesis of the different ideas that circulated within UNESCO's new

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<sup>27</sup> The meeting took place in September 1995 during the 22<sup>nd</sup> bureau meeting of the International Council for PGI. The debate is reflected in the meeting's report, see UNESCO, "Final Report", PGI bureau, 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, PGI-95/COUNCIL/BUR.XXII/6, September 1995 (UNESDOC).

<sup>28</sup> These were the organisations holding formal associate relations with UNESCO. Later the draft statement was also circulated among all other professional organisations cooperating with CII through consultative or operational relations (for more details about UNESCO's relationship with NGOs, see chapter 3, Part I [see here page 47ff]). Only two written comments are preserved in the archives, both sent by IFLA representatives (CII/PGI.AP/95.531, 13 November 1995, [consulted before official archiving, no UA code]).

<sup>29</sup> *Courrier, L'Unesco sans peine*, 259.

<sup>30</sup> UNESCO, "UNESCO and an Information Society for all. A position paper", CII-96/WS/4, May 1996 (UNESDOC). See also Appendix n. 3, "Selected UNESCO documents".

sector and amongst the professional groups working with the sector, during its first years of existence.

Moreover, the position statement introduced a new perspective that had not appeared in earlier texts. While prior documents by UNESCO had already warned about the risk that the Internet and digital infrastructures in general might increase global imbalances caused by the gap between “information haves” and “have-nots”, the 1996 position statement was the first document to relate these risks to the commercialisation of the Internet and the increasingly liberalised market for all Internet-related services:

“It is true that economic and commercial interests now seem to be the main driving force for the building of information highways. But it is also obvious that culture, education and science, as distinct and integral parts of our civilization, cannot be left totally at the mercy of market forces. Information highways must not simply provide new and more powerful channels for electronic consumption.”<sup>31</sup>

Consequently, the statement expressed a very different stance from Al Gore’s announcements of the NII and GII, and most international and national policy statements inspired by them. Warning about the effects that policy approaches that were inspired purely by commercial interests could have for UNESCO’s fields of mandate, the position statement can be seen as the first trace of a market-critical stance that became increasingly important in the following years.

Furthermore, instead of encountering the technological development by projects such as the development of technology and infrastructures, which would go beyond UNESCO’s competences and budgetary possibilities, the position statement proposed that the organisation should view the social, cultural and economic changes from a more philosophical perspective. To this end, it should “facilitate international debate on the human rights issues of the coming information age” and “promote international reflection on major ethical and cultural issues concerning information highways”.<sup>32</sup>

This suggestion is particularly interesting, as it lifted the discussion on how UNESCO should respond to the challenges of the new information landscape to a meta-level: instead of rushing into new practical projects aimed at counterbalancing the interests and forces at play in the upcoming information society, it introduced the idea that any

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. This comment reflected some concerns expressed by member states when the draft document was discussed during the above-mentioned meeting of all programme commissions in 1995. For the debate’s summary, see UNESCO, “Records of the General Conference”, 28 C/Proceedings, 1995, 699ff (UNESDOC).

<sup>32</sup> UNESCO, “UNESCO and an Information Society for all. A position paper”, CII-96/WS/4, May 1996 (UNESDOC). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

concrete decision needed to be preceded by a moment of stocktaking of the values and norms that should guide behaviour and regulation in the new informational environment.<sup>33</sup> These common values and norms should lay the foundations for a consensus on principles for the virtual space and pave the way for more concrete agreements on how to respond to the challenges posed by digital technology. And as a matter of fact, it was this ethical perspective on the information society that eventually became the *leitmotif* of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society.

### **Institutional context: UNESCO and global ethics**

To better understand UNESCO's turn towards meta-level reflections on the ethical questions related to the new digital environment, it is necessary to understand the broader institutional context since this new perspective was clearly influenced by UNESCO's general orientation of that time. In general, a focus on ethical and normative questions related to its fields of activity has been part of UNESCO's intellectual mandate since its inception.<sup>34</sup> As such, the intellectual and ethical tasks were often seen as a counterweight to the practical projects that tend to dominate UNESCO's programme activities.<sup>35</sup> During the mandate of the Spanish scientist Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO between 1987 and 1999, this tendency was even more pronounced; enhanced by Mayor's overarching strategy to foster a "culture of peace" based on moral responsibility and global solidarity, it is possible to observe a general shift from a more intellectual perspective towards a purely ethical perspective of UNESCO's programmes.<sup>36</sup> During this time, debates about the empirical or scientific background of global problems occurring in all programme sectors of UNESCO were often replaced by the more philosophical search for moral principles that are common to all cultures, religions and nations represented within UNESCO.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Verena Metze-Mangold, Personal Interview, 16 September 2014.

<sup>34</sup> For a historical overview on UNESCO's activities related to ethics, see Yersu Kim, *A common framework for the ethics of the 21st century*, UNESCO Division of Philosophy and Ethics, (Paris: UNESCO, 1999), 19ff (UNESDOC).

<sup>35</sup> Maurel, *Histoire de l'Unesco*, 81.

<sup>36</sup> Federico Mayor, "Das Unmögliche muß bald Wirklichkeit werden. Eine neue ethische Landkarte für die globale Zukunft", in *Eine Welt Für Alle. Visionen von Globalem Bewusstsein*, ed. Andreas Giger (Rosenheim: Horizonte Verlag, 1990), 35-45; Dieter Offenhäusser, "Die UNESCO und eine internationale Ethik", *UNESCO Heute* 2-3 (1998): 91-95; Traugott Schöfthaler, "Das Kater Murr-Prinzip der globalen Ethik", *UNESCO Heute* 1 (1998): 1.

<sup>37</sup> It would be possible to go even further and draw the network of the influential factors even beyond UNESCO's borders: during the 1990s, the search for universal norms and ethical principles did not only occupy UNESCO but a large number of international organisations, commissions, NGOs, academic and

This reinforcement of UNESCO's ethical mission was reflected by a number of projects initiated during Mayor's mandate. The most prominent amongst them was the Bioethics Programme, started in 1993 through the creation of an International Bioethics Commission (IBC) under the auspices of UNESCO's Social and Human Science Sector. In 1997, the efforts of the IBC led to the adoption of an International Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, followed in 1998 by the founding of the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee as a specialised, ethical forum representing governments.<sup>38</sup> The same year, UNESCO also created the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST). As an independent ethics advisory board informing the organisation about ethical issues pertaining to science and technology, COMEST was created to foster a dialogue about these topics among the public, policy-makers and the scientific community.

Both initiatives were aimed at finding a minimum set of shared values and standards that policy-makers from all different member states could follow when deciding on rules and regulations in the fields in question.<sup>39</sup> They were complemented by a third, more general ethics initiative: the UNESCO Universal Ethics Project which was launched in 1997 following a recommendation made by the report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, entitled "Our Creative Diversity". Within the context of this Universal Ethics Project, selected philosophers, ethicists and theologians met for several brainstorming sessions to identify fundamental ethical principles of the emerging global society and to develop a set of values that should help humanity to deal with the pressing problems caused by globalisation.<sup>40</sup>

The idea of fostering debates on questions related to the ethics of the information society did not, therefore, represent an entirely new idea for UNESCO, but was aligned with the organisation's other ethics programmes and in many ways influenced by them. This

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political institutions as well as individual thinkers, as for example the Commission on Global Governance calling for a global civic ethic, or the Parliament of the World's Religions that adopted a declaration towards a Global Ethic in 1993 (Kim, *A Common Framework for the Ethics of the 21st Century*).

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Richardson, "Questioning Authority. Science and Ethics", in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005*, ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2006), 474-75. The Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights was adopted unanimously at UNESCO's 29<sup>th</sup> General Conference in November 1997 and endorsed one year later by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, "The Human Genome and Human Rights", 53<sup>rd</sup> session, Resolution A/RES/53/152 adopted on 9 December 1998, <http://www.un.org/esa/documents/ares53.htm> [last accessed 15 June 2015]).

<sup>39</sup> Hufner and Reuther, *UNESCO-Handbuch*, 93.

<sup>40</sup> A detailed description of the project and all written contributions are available in UNESCO, "The Universal Ethics Project", Preliminary Report, Part II, Archive of Participants Contributions, PHE-98/WS/1, May 1998 (UNESDOC).

becomes even more apparent when considering the fact that all these ethical initiatives, initiated by UNESCO during Mayor's mandate, shared several interesting characteristics. First of all, they were all based on a very vague understanding of the term "ethics": Some critics claimed that any official UNESCO document would include a clear definition of what is meant by "ethics".<sup>41</sup> Yet others remarked that it was never UNESCO's ambition to come up with a concrete definition of ethics or ethical norms that should guide people's behaviour or policy-makers' decisions; instead, these projects simply aimed at fostering an international debate on ethical questions and promoting the reflection on shared norms and values. Consequently, it could also not be the responsibility of an intergovernmental organisation to

"define ethics and morality or determine what is good and what is evil. The point is not to draw up a list of values and standards of behavior that must be respected. As others have said so well, what UNESCO must do is to provide a space for ethical reflection in which various aspects can be examined, points of reference can be established and options can be projected into the future, thus playing its role as an intellectual forum".<sup>42</sup>

Accordingly, instead of developing a clear definition of what is understood as (universal) ethics, the organisation referred to existing normative frameworks such as the Universal Declarations on Human Rights. These previously agreed sets of shared values should serve as a global ethical foundation on which the organisation could situate its own philosophical undertakings — a sort of *Weltethik* based on vague principles such as "global justice" and the "common good".<sup>43</sup> In other words, within UNESCO's ethics programmes, the concept of "ethics" was not perceived as a well-defined system of moral principles or rules of conduct. Instead, it was considered as a way of reflecting on shared values and the resulting rights and responsibilities.

In addition, a second common feature of UNESCO's ethics programmes was a critical stance towards market forces, commercialisation and private interests that were believed to dilute ethical solutions to global problems.<sup>44</sup> Many of IBC's or COMEST's proposals

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<sup>41</sup> Bruno de Padirac, "Hard Talk. The Controversy Surrounding UNESCO's Contribution to the Management of the Scientific Enterprise, 1945-2005", in *Sixty Years of Science at UNESCO 1945-2005*, ed. UNESCO (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2006), 480.

<sup>42</sup> Augusto Galán-Sarmiento, "What UNESCO is and what it is not", Task Force on UNESCO in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2000, [http://www.unesco.org/webworld/taskforce21/documents/colombie\\_en.rtf](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/taskforce21/documents/colombie_en.rtf) (last accessed 4 October 2014).

<sup>43</sup> Courier mentions that the only structured attempt to define the ethical mission of UNESCO and the ways how it could be put into practice was done by the Universal Ethics Project, (Yves Courier, "The Specific Nature of UNESCO"). It however did not seem to have reached any conclusion.

<sup>44</sup> J.P. Singh, *United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, 73.

implied that governments should voluntarily restrict the exploitation of resources and markets for commercial purposes for the benefit of social and cultural values. This approach was well summarised by Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland and COMEST's first chairperson (1998-2001), who described the commission as a "Forum of Reflection to define principles, which can provide decision-makers in sensitive areas with criteria, other than strictly economic ones, for making choices."<sup>45</sup> Consequently, the ethical perspective was conceived as a counterbalance to policy solutions driven solely by economic priorities, and as a counterbalance to neo-liberal policy approaches that dominated most international and national discussions at that time.

In light of this perspective, it is surprising that the suggestion UNESCO should deal with the ethical challenges pertaining to digital technology was made so soon after the organisation had undergone a major crisis due to its involvement in the NWICO debate. In many ways, the claims expressed by developing countries in the context of the New World Information and Communication Order had been ethical postulations for more equality, solidarity and guiding principles in the field of information and media that were based on other factors than commercial interests. Accordingly, they also opposed the dominance of highly developed Western states that pursued a very different approach. The result is known: the NWICO debate turned into an ideological confrontation, fired by political and economic interests, and eventually led the US and UK governments to withdraw from UNESCO. Yet, less than 15 years later the organisation was once again willing to engage in a debate about the relationship between fundamental rights, access and ethical questions that could not but touch on issues of global imbalances and economic inequalities related to information and communication. It was, in addition, during the same period that the UK government finally decided to return to UNESCO. After twelve years of absence, the United Kingdom officially rejoined UNESCO's member states community in July 1997. The United States, on the contrast, undertook this step only in 2003 and, thus, at the end of their period under scrutiny in this thesis.

In summary, the moment when UNESCO started to work on the societal and ethical dimensions of the information society was clearly marked by its technological and historical context. Not only was it the time when the Internet started to grow into a mass technology for both normal users and private enterprises; it was also a period characterised by pervasive privatisation and deregulation, in particular in the telecommunication sector. This neo-liberal tendency was further emphasised by the

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<sup>45</sup> Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, "Opening Address", in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, CI-2001/WS/3 (Paris: UNESCO, 2001), 56.



dominant policy discourse of that time that emerged from the US agenda for National Information Infrastructures and opened up the international debate on the Internet and its economic and societal potential. In this context, UNESCO started to prepare the first Medium-Term Strategy of its new Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics, and eventually decided to focus on questions other than economic and technological problems by lifting the debate on information highways to a meta-level where it discussed the ethical values and norms that should influence all behaviour and decision-making in the upcoming information society.

The following figure visualises the background of this first episode and illustrates how the general direction of UNESCO’s initial policy response to the information society was influenced by both the general historical context and the organisation’s particular institutional context under Mayor’s administration, where the reflection on general ethics held a centre state position:

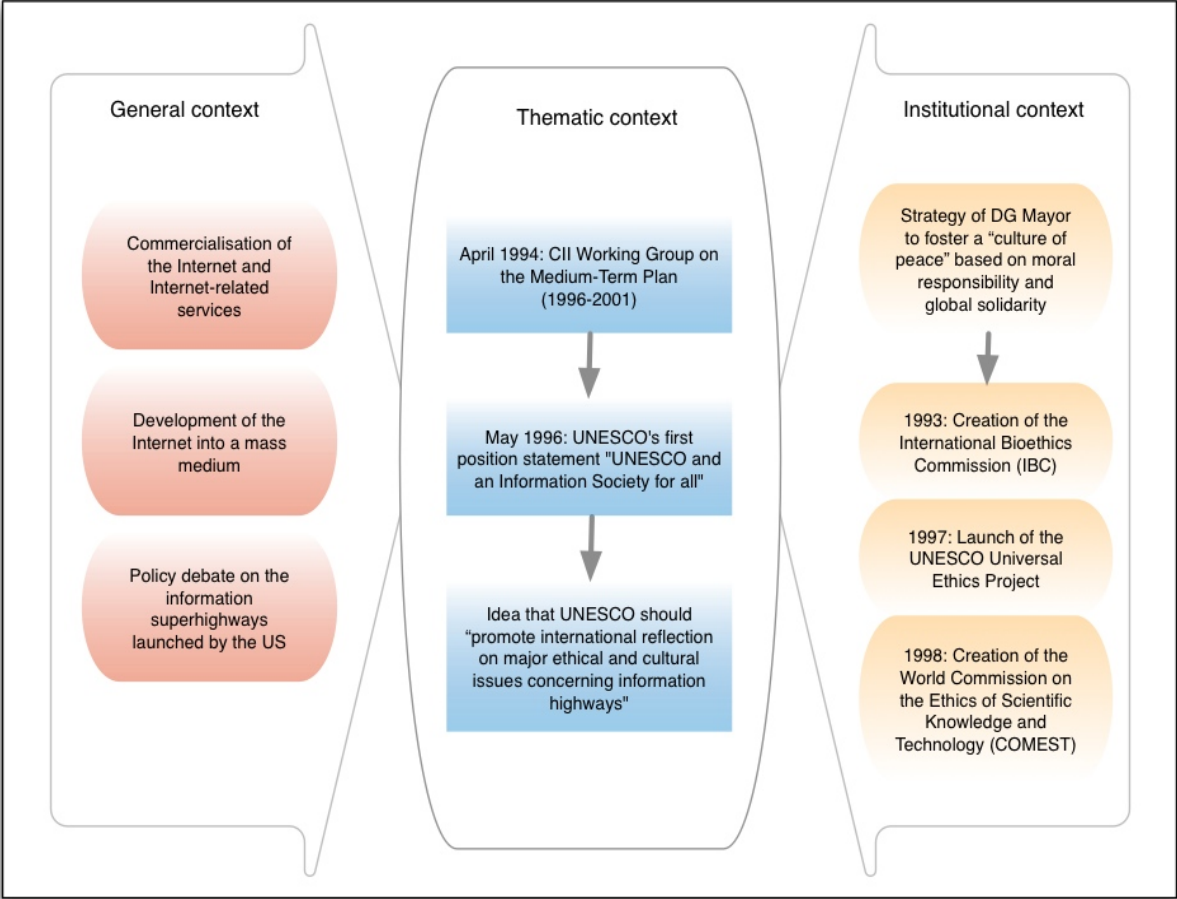


Figure 9: General context of UNESCO’s search for ideas and values pertaining to the information society

## 1.2 Analysis of the performative dimension: Identifying the ethical questions of the information society

The policy debate on the information highways and UNESCO's general focus on universal ethics represent the historical, institutional and thematic context for the first episode of UNESCO's policy response to the information society, whose performative dimension is described in this second sub-chapter. Yet, while these contextual aspects certainly influenced UNESCO's search for ideas and values pertaining to the information society, they were not its sole instigators. Instead, the idea of focusing on ethical dimensions of the information society was initially taken up by the professional communities involved in UNESCO's General Information Programme (PGI) and, consequently, strongly influenced by the conception of information ethics common in the field of information studies and librarianship. The topics discussed were later broadened, covering also aspects that are not traditionally considered part of these disciplines.

The analysis of the performative dimension of this episode starts by retracing the evolution of UNESCO's debates on the ethical questions of the information highways, based on the analytical and chronological structuration of information ethics proposed by the Information philosopher Luciano Floridi.<sup>46</sup> It then focuses on a series of conferences called INFOethics, which UNESCO organised between 1997 and 2000 and whose purpose was to foster an open and critical exchange about information ethics "as the branch of the philosophy of information that investigates, in a broad sense, the ethical impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on human life and society".<sup>47</sup> In its last part, the analysis of the performative dimension more closely analyses the most influential actors involved in this first episode of UNESCO's policy response to the information society and its epistemic community. Despite their close interrelation, the ideas and discourses instigated by this community as well as the debates and exchanges of the INFOethics conferences are analysed separately from the performative dimension, in the last sub-chapter dedicated to the discursive dimension.

In order to retrace the search for and exchange of ideas during the early period of the CII Sector, the performative analysis was based on a number of different sources: Most importantly, all holdings of the UNESCO Archives concerning CII's activities during the period under scrutiny were screened, in particular those of the INFOethics conference, the CII Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy (1996–2001) and all documents reflecting the draft and discussions on the organisation's first position statements. In

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<sup>46</sup> Luciano Floridi, *The Ethics of Information* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

addition, various versions of the CII web portal of the 1990s were consulted, in particular the websites of the INFOethics series that contained details, papers and statements of the conferences.<sup>48</sup> Lastly, the desk and archive research was complemented by interviews with CII staff members in charge of the INFOethics programme as well as participants and observers of the conferences, most importantly Peter Canisius, Milagros del Corral (per email), George Dupont, Paul Hector, Ronald Koven, Verena Metze-Mangold, Victor Montviloff, Henrikas Yushkiavitshus, and Philippe Quéau.<sup>49</sup>

### **The beginning of information ethics within UNESCO**

Looking at the development of the information ethics discussions within UNESCO, it can be assumed that the early proposals leading to the organisation's first position and strategy papers did not anticipate the contentious potential of an ethical debate on the new information technologies. As a matter of fact, the very first proposal to "initiate a global reflexion on the ethical issues related to the production and use of information for communication, informatics and information services" was made in 1994 in the context of the Working Group on the Medium Term Strategy (1996-2001).<sup>50</sup> Rather than reflecting on moral obligations resulting from the increasing commercialisation of information, it suggested responding to the growing convergence of the three fields under CII's responsibility by defining and harmonising the ethical principles guiding the three professional groups concerned (journalists, information specialists and computer experts) in their work. Consequently, the focus was not placed on the socio-economic aspects of the informational environment but on the professional ethics regarding the production, communication and use of information.

With a very similar conception of information ethics in mind, UNESCO's General Information Programme (PGI) seized the initiative and, in July 1995, organised a first,

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<sup>48</sup> The CII web portal and the websites of the INFOethics conferences have been archived in the context of the Internet Archive Project and are still available online: <https://web.archive.org/web/20000511102719/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/index.shtml> (last accessed 30 October 2014).

<sup>49</sup> For more background information about the interviewees, see Appendix n. 1, "List of interviewees".

<sup>50</sup> Yves Courrier, "Preparation of the Fourth Medium Term Plan", Memo sent to ADG/CII, CII/UCE/2/5/94, 27 April 1994 (UA: CI/INF/198). It remains unclear whether this memo actually initiated the information ethics programme within UNESCO, or whether other, similar proposals might have appeared at the same time. Its author, who was not later involved in the organisation of the INFOethics conferences, stated that he has never received any follow-up note on the proposal and, thus, did not think that it had been taken into consideration (Yves Courrier, Phone interview, 2 September 2014). However, the memo represents the first trace of the subject found in the UNESCO Archives.

relatively small Expert meeting on Legal and Ethical Issues of Access to Electronic Information. The debates during this exploratory meeting only related to the major legal and ethical issues that libraries and archives had to face in the electronic environment.<sup>51</sup> It thereby restricted the question of information ethics to the field of specialised and professional information services only. This is not particularly surprising at this was the field that PGI was responsible for and in which it had a large network of experts due to its well-established relationship with the respective professional communities.<sup>52</sup> In addition, it had been in information sciences and librarianship where ethical questions related to information had emerged in the 1980s.<sup>53</sup>

The information philosopher Luciano Floridi describes this kind of ethical consideration, which remained restricted to information services, as the first stage in the evolution of information ethics: at this stage, information was simply considered a resource. Consequently, early ethical discourses were mostly concerned with the efficient and fair management of this resource and circled around questions of data confidentiality, quality and usage. Since the achievement of morally desirable goals was seen as being dependent from the accessibility and availability of informational resources, this interpretation of information ethics was also concerned with the problem of equity in access to information and the gap between “information haves” and “have not’s”.<sup>54</sup> And as a matter of fact, these were the exact themes of UNESCO’s first meeting on the issue of information ethics.

But this restricted understanding of information ethics soon changed when the first small expert group recommended organising a larger meeting on the subject in order to identify the major ethical issues that required international attention and to make proposals for a strategy for international cooperation. While the original plan was to hold this meeting back to back with the regular session of PGI’s Intergovernmental Council in 1996, UNESCO eventually postponed and replaced it with a bigger international congress that would cover all three fields of CII’s responsibility and would reflect their convergence.

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<sup>51</sup> UNESCO, “Expert Meeting on Legal and Ethical Issues of Access to Electronic Information”, Tentative Programme and draft agenda, PGI-95/LE/1, June 1995 (UNESDOC).

<sup>52</sup> To name only two of the experts involved in this first meeting: The two working documents serving as input for the debate were prepared by Thomas Fröhlich, one of the first information experts contributing to the new field of information ethics, and Pierre Trudel, a Canadian specialist of information law.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Fröhlich, “A Brief History of Information Ethics”, *Textos Universitaris de Biblioteconomia I Documentació* 13 (December 2004), <http://bid.ub.edu/13froel2.htm> (last accessed 1 October 2015). According to Fröhlich, the concept of “information ethics” was first used in the 1980s by scholars of librarianship, in particular Rafael Capurro, “Informationsethos und Informationsethik. Gedanken zum verantwortungsvollen Handeln im Bereich der Fachinformation”, *Nachrichten für Dokumentation* 39 (1988): 1-4; Robert Hauptman, *Ethical Challenges in Librarianship* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 21f.

Consequently, the unit in charge of the organisation was not longer PGI's small secretariat or the bureau of its intergovernmental council but the newly created Information and Informatics Division (CII/INF), under the leadership of its recently recruited French director Philippe Quéau. Within this new division, the staff member mainly responsible for the work on the ethical, legal and social aspects of ICTs was Victor Montviloff, who had previously been in charge of the section for information policies within PGI and UNISIST.

Following this enlarged scope for the first conference on information ethics, the new team started afresh in identifying the questions to be raised and the experts to be invited. It thereby followed the development of information ethics which eventually, during the 1990s, left the disciplinary borders of librarianship behind and, driven by the growth of digital access and the Internet, opened up for new sorts of questions concerning the access to and ownership of information.<sup>55</sup> According to Floridi, with this expansion, information ethics entered a second stage and began to merge with computer ethics where information was primarily considered a commodity that held a certain value and could be consumed and produced by both individual and professional users. This conceptualisation of information-as-commodity added an additional layer to the idea of information-as-resource by also taking into consideration the “distributed and pervasive creation, consumption, sharing, and control of all kinds of information, by a very large and quickly increasing population of people online, commonly used to dealing with digital tools of all sorts”.<sup>56</sup>

For UNESCO, this expansion resulted in the addition of economic and commercial aspects to the debate on information access. As a consequence, the moral and ethical questions now raised also concerned socio-legal issues like the role of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the digital sphere as well as misinformation, accountability and liability. All these topics had already been mentioned as urgent aspects in UNESCO's early strategy papers and position statements on the information highways; but by making them the main subjects of UNESCO's first conference on information ethics, they were now, for the first time, systematically discussed by professional and academic expert who thereby helped to prepare the ground for UNESCO's official policy discourse on these matters.

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<sup>55</sup> Paul Sturges, “Information Ethics in the Twenty First Century”, *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 40, no. 4 (2009): 241-51.

<sup>56</sup> Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 22.

## INFOethics: A conference series on the ethical dimension of the information society

Initially UNESCO encountered difficulties in convincing many of the invited experts to attend the planned conference. On the one hand, this was due to the vague notion of “info-ethics” that had been chosen as the official title of the conference and remained very obscure to professionals involved in the development of digital technology and the growing Internet economy.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, some of the Western democratic governments of UNESCO’s member states were sceptical about the direction UNESCO’s information ethics discussion would take, from the very beginning, as they sensed the risk that authoritarian governments might use the discussions on norms and principles in order to lobby for more governmental control of the informational sphere.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, they did not support the idea of the conference.

Regardless of these difficulties, the INFOethics First International Congress on Ethical, Legal and Societal Aspects on Digital Information took place in March 1997 in Monaco. Like many aspects of the conference, the cooperation with the government of Monaco was also an initiative of Philippe Quéau, the new director of CII/INF. In his prior position at the French *Institut National de l’audiovisuel* (INA) he had founded the annual forum on computer graphics *IMAGINA*, which had, since 1981 taken place as part of the Monte-Carlo Television Festival; thanks to the existing contacts, the INFOethics congress was organised at the same place.<sup>59</sup> In addition, it was supported by the Danish, French and German National Commissions for UNESCO and the *Agence pour La Francophonie* (ACCT), and covered by several media, most prominently *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

The congress was attended by some 250 participants and brought together 35 experts presenting research on the different topics of the programme. Among the most prominent speakers were Robert Kahn, co-founder of the Internet, and Michael Nelson, Special Assistant for Information Technology of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Even though a variety of issues were discussed, most debates of the congress eventually crystallised around the predominant understanding of information

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<sup>57</sup> Victor Montviloff, Personal interview, 21 October 2013. The name of the meeting and its classification according to UNESCO’s regulation were intensively discussed during PGI’s 23<sup>rd</sup> bureau meeting in 1996. Eventually, the name “INFOethics. International Congress on Ethical, Legal and Societal Aspects of Digital Information” was proposed by Quéau, Director of CII/INF (UNESCO, “Final report”, PGI bureau, 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting, PGI.96/COUNCIL/BUR/XXIII/7, June 1996, 5 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>58</sup> Metze-Mangold, Personal Interview.

<sup>59</sup> Philippe Quéau, Personal interview, 25 April 2013.

ownership and the relationship between users and owners of information.<sup>60</sup> That way, the large range of subjects was narrowed down to a fundamental controversy over public and private interests in a global information economy, a subject that provoked heated exchanges among the speakers and with the participants from the floor, in which —as UNESCO’s Director-General diplomatically summarised— “opinions diverged significantly”.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the controversial perspectives expressed during the congress, the event was considered a success by both its participants and those of UNESCO’s member states who had followed it. As a result, the first congress was followed by a second conference in October 1998, and a third and last one in November 2000.<sup>62</sup> In the period between the conferences, from October 1997 to April 1998, several experts continued to debate in an online discussion forum, set up for this purpose by the Information Science Department of the University of Constance, Germany.<sup>63</sup> This virtual forum, whose creation was recommended during the first INFOethics congress, was set up and managed by Rainer Kuhlen, professor at the University of Constance and member of the German Commission for UNESCO; it was used as an experiment to provide UNESCO with knowledge about the potentials of the Internet. To this end, UNESCO invited 60 international experts to take part in the online exchange but only a few of them actually engaged in it. Yet, just like the discussions during the first INFOethics congress, the limited online exchanges also showed that, according to the experts, the ethical challenges of the information society were fundamentally related to conflicts of interests, for

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<sup>60</sup> Rainer Kuhlen, “Das Ethos der Informationsgesellschaft ist das Internet. Anmerkungen zum ersten ‘Info-Ethics’-Kongreß der UNESCO”, *UNESCO Heute* 3 (1997): 63; Verena Metze-Mangold, “‘Info-Ethics’ im Zeitalter des Internet: die UNESCO tastet sich vor. Erster internationaler Kongreß über ethische, rechtliche und gesellschaftliche Aspekte digitaler Information, Monte Carlo, 10. bis 12. März 1997”, *UNESCO Heute* 3 (1997): 61.

<sup>61</sup> UNESCO, “Review of current activities of the General Information Programme and of the Information and Informatics Division”, no document code, May 1997, 5 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>62</sup> The proposal to organise a regular, if possible even annual series of INFOethics conferences was made during the Executive Board meeting in April 1997 as part of a larger strategy to meet the challenges of the Information Highways (UNESCO, “The Implementation of 150 EX/Decision 3.5.1 concerning the challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO”, 151 EX/16, 21 April 1997, 1 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>63</sup> Rainer Kuhlen, “VF-INFOethics: Links from INFOethics ’97 to INFOethics ’98”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and Proceedings*, CII-98/CONF.401/CLD.4 (Paris: UNESCO, 2000), 48. Since it was the first online discussion forum used by UNESCO’s CII Sector, it can be seen as a forerunner to a number of other online meeting spaces created by UNESCO in the following years, most prominently for the preparation of WSIS.

example between intellectual property rights and free access to information or between a free flow of information and the need for international regulation.<sup>64</sup>

With every conference, the format of the conference series and its theme became more established. The later meetings not only attracted more speakers, but also an increasing number of participants from other international organisations and NGOs. While the 1998 conference was attended by about 160 participants and 28 speakers, INFOethics 2000 attracted more than 300 participants and 32 presenters. For both conferences, UNESCO sent out invitations to international organisations and NGOs, like ITU, the European Council, ECOSOC, FAO, IAMCR, IFLA, ILO, OECD, and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). Most of them did not attend the event in 1998, but some eventually took part in the 2000 event and thereby confirmed the growing relevance of both the topic of information ethics and UNESCO's role in promoting it. To increase international visibility of the subject, UNESCO further organised four regional INFOethics workshops over the course of the year 2000, which took place in Africa (Addis-Abeba), Asia and Pacific (Beijing), Europe (Vienna) and Latin America (Rio de Janeiro). This way, the conference series also started to reach beyond the small circle of professional communities dealing with information, ICTs and cyber law, and began to arouse the interest of policy-makers. Consequently, it not only sensitise UNESCO's member states, including all major economies and most developing countries, for the importance of ethical questions in the information society, but also placed these questions on international and national policy agendas.<sup>65</sup> In addition, the public and political interest in the topic of the conferences gave the new field of information ethics "a kind of stamp of approval"<sup>66</sup> and paved the way for ethical debates in other international fora. Thus, it was also an explicit long-term objective of the last conference in 2000 to bring the ethical, legal and societal issues discussed to the attention of the World Summit on the Information Society, which ITU had started planning two years earlier.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Rainer Kuhlen, "VF-INFOethics: Links from INFOethics '97 to INFOethics '98", in UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and Proceedings*; Verena Metze-Mangold, "Infoethics '98'. Die UNESCO sucht ihre Rolle im internationalen System", *UNESCO Heute* 4 (1998): 93-97. Parts of the virtual forum are still accessible via the Internet Archive Project: <http://web.archive.org/web/20000607220201/http://www.de3.emb.net/infoethics/index.asp?TUSR=> (last accessed 2 September 2014).

<sup>65</sup> Rainer Kuhlen, "Informationsethik", in *Handbuch Grundlagen von Information und Dokumentation*, ed. Rainer Kuhlen, Thomas Seeger, and Dietmar Strauch (München: Saur-Verlag, 2004), 1-11.

<sup>66</sup> Sturges, "Information Ethics in the Twenty First Century", 247.

<sup>67</sup> UNESCO, "Summary Report", in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, 18. As a matter of fact, the ethical questions and challenges of the information society were debated at length during WSIS. In addition, the outcome document of the first phase of the World Summit, the Geneva Plan of Action, placed on UNESCO the responsibility for the implementation of *Action Line C10 Ethical dimensions of the Information Society* and thereby confirmed its authority regarding this topic.



With the success of the conference series, UNESCO also became more confident in its selection of topics. Instead of brainstorming on the multitude of possible ethical questions, the later meetings focused on crucial, but often controversial issues such as privacy, confidentiality, open source software, content control and freedom of expression. Floridi describes this shift as the progress towards a third stage of information ethics — the “ethics of the informational environment”: with people living and working in an environment dominated by the constant presence of information and ICT, new moral and ethical questions arose that went beyond the understanding of information as a simple resource or product. Instead, the increasing immersion of both users and producers of information into the digital environment raised questions about the responsibility of individuals when confronted with the informational world surrounding them.<sup>68</sup> Following this development, the later INFOethics conferences centred around the issue of “citizenship in cyberspace”, described as a new kind of citizenship whose persistence could only be possible if the Internet remained a space open and accessible to everyone, in which citizens’ rights to privacy, security and confidentiality were respected.<sup>69</sup>

As a consequence of this new thematic trend, the tendency towards a critical perspective on the information economy increased with the second and third INFOethics conferences. During the first meeting in 1997, many of the attending US experts and representatives of the IT economy had expressed their belief that “the question of ethics is a question of market”<sup>70</sup>, and had argued in favour of private sector leadership in the digital sphere.<sup>71</sup> But this point of view progressively disappeared during the following meetings. Instead, most interventions in 1998 and 2000 uttered a rather critical view on the increasing dominance of commercial players in the regulation of the Internet and the ICT sector.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to private and economic interests, experts emphasised the

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<sup>68</sup> Floridi, *The Ethics of Information*, 23ff. Although Floridi himself considers this tripartite analysis of the development of information ethics as too simplistic and inadequate to fully grasp the complexity of information ethics, it allows us to structure, both analytically and chronologically, UNESCO’s progressive elaboration of a policy discourse on the ethical dimension of the information society. Floridi overcomes the inadequacy of his model by developing it further and adding a fourth stage: the more comprehensive approach to information ethics as a macro-ethics (ibid., 25f).

<sup>69</sup> Metze-Mangold, “Infoethics ‘98. Die UNESCO sucht ihre Rolle im internationalen System”, 94.

<sup>70</sup> Verena Metze-Mangold, “‘Info-Ethics’ im Zeitalter des Internet: die UNESCO tastet sich vor”, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Kuhlen, “Das Ethos der Informationsgesellschaft ist das Internet. Anmerkungen zum ersten ‘Info-Ethics’-Kongreß der UNESCO”, 63. This perspective was exemplarily expressed by the US information specialist Jeffrey Ritter in his intervention on “Private sector leadership in global policy reform” (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”). Most papers presented at the INFOethics congress 1997 have been published in a special volume of the *International Information & Library Review*, edited by PGI committee member Toni Carbo (*International Information & Library Review* 29, no. 3-4 [September 1997]: 261-516).

<sup>72</sup> Only a few speakers presented an entirely different perspective, e.g. Brian Wafawarowa, President of the South African Publishers Association, and András Szinger, copyright expert of the Hungarian Bureau for

interests of the public, and reflected on the fundamental philosophical and ethical principles behind legal arrangements like IPRs. Speakers invited to the later conferences included, amongst others, Richard Stallman, founder of the free software foundation and fierce critic of all forms of proprietary software, and Mark Rotenberg, a US privacy law expert who warned about the commercial and governmental exploitation of personal data. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, chairperson of COMEST<sup>73</sup>, eventually summarised these positions in her closing statement to the conference in 1998:

“We badly need global governance that is not driven by commercial interest, but addresses values other than economic ones, which after all are defended by the World Trade Organization and OECD. The problem with globalization is that its common denominator is economic and financial, while the cultures and values that make our lives rich in a different sense tend to be ignored. A redefinition of our priorities has long become overdue.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Fostering a critical approach to the information economy**

This critical stance on commercialisation and private interest was not particular to the INFOethics debates. Rather, it was a general feature of all ethics programmes that UNESCO initiated during the 1990s. In the field of information, this perspective was additionally fostered by the new director of CII’s Division for Information and Informatics, the French telecommunication engineer and ICT expert Philippe Quéau. Appointed for the specific task of leading UNESCO’s search for a position concerning the Internet, Quéau and his ideas can be considered one of the main influential factors for UNESCO’s discourse on the information society during the second half of the 1990s. As part of this, he also acted as the driving force behind the market-critical approach that started to emerge shortly after his recruitment in summer 1996.

From the moment of his appointment, it is possible to observe the new director’s intellectual and conceptual influence on UNESCO’s debates. Thus, Quéau tried to align his ideas with UNESCO’s on-going discussions on the information society by starting a

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the Protection of Authors’ Rights (for their interventions, see Web archive “INFOethics 1998” and Web archive “INFOethics 2000”).

<sup>73</sup> Recall that COMEST is the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology, created by UNESCO in 1998. During its first session in April 1999, it created a number of sub-commissions, including one on the Ethics of the Information Society. This sub-commission met for a 2-days meeting at UNESCO in June 2001 and published a report summarising its discussions. However, since there is no visible influence on either UNESCO’s official policy discourse or on internal exchanges within its Secretariat and governing bodies, the role of COMEST is not further analysed in this thesis.

<sup>74</sup> Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, “Closing Address”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and Proceedings*, 342.

process of “translation” right from the beginning.<sup>75</sup> It is possible to identify four stages or strategies of this translation process:

First, shortly after his recruitment, Quéau expressed his personal perspective initially only through a number of internal documents, such as memos addressed to his hierarchical superiors, in which he criticised, for instance, the growing liberalisation of the IT market epitomised through the US proposal to declare the Internet a “global free-trade zone”. Based on this kind of critique, he claimed that UNESCO should open a wide public debate on the concept of “public good” in the cyber age and seize the opportunity to instigate an alternative policy approach to the information society.<sup>76</sup>

Secondly, following this internal diffusion of his ideas, he also drafted more official documents expressing a similar tone and introducing the new director’s views to a larger group of people. A good example for this “translation” was the thought-provoking input document prepared by Quéau for a group of experts mandated by the Executive Board to advise the Director-General “on key issues related to communication and information highways and the emerging information society”.<sup>77</sup> This High-Level Expert Group on the Information Highways met only twice between 1995 and 1997 and included new faces — e.g. Michael R. Nelson, Special Assistant for Information Technology of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy— as well as experts who had already cooperated with UNESCO in the past, for example Roberto Savio, founder of Inter Press Service (IPS) and media advisor to the MacBride commission during the NWICO movement. In his input document for their second meeting, Quéau proposed a number of initiatives for UNESCO to take in response to the challenges of the upcoming digital age, such as reinforcing the access to information in the public domain, promoting the importance of the copyright exemptions for scientific and educational purposes and preparing an “International Declaration on Info-Ethics and Info-Rights” which would ideally lead to

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<sup>75</sup> Recall that, drawing on ANT, translations are defined as processes of negotiation, persuasion and argumentation through which actors construct common definitions and meanings and mobilise others to share their idea and to align their interests.

<sup>76</sup> Philippe Quéau, “Internet as a ‘Global free-trade zone’”, Memo, DIR/CII/INF/97/087, 10 July 1997 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>77</sup> UNESCO, “Remarks by the Director-General on the recommendations of the Executive Board”, 28 C/INF.10, 5 September 1995, 7 (UNESDOC). The relevance of the debates and outcomes of the expert group’s meetings were questioned by other professional experts during the 24<sup>th</sup> bureau meeting of PGI’s intergovernmental council, see UNESCO, “Final report”, PGI bureau, 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, PGI.97/COUNCIL/BUR/XXIV/7, June 1997 (UNESDOC). As neither the group nor its meetings seem to have had any visible influence on UNESCO’s general reflection on the information society, the group’s work is not further analysed in this thesis.

the “utopian objective” of a “World Convention on Cyberspace”.<sup>78</sup> All of these ideas were related to the problems that UNESCO had already previously identified, in particular during the preparation of the Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001 and in the position statement “UNESCO and an Information Society for All”. However, building on this work, Quéau went a step further by proposing a more critical position and far more radical solutions to the identified problems, and thus added an entirely new layer to the exiting discourse. In addition, he consequently used the term “cyberspace” instead of “information highways” which had previously been part of UNESCO’s preferred vocabulary. Quéau thereby emphasised that his vision went beyond the technical questions of technical infrastructures and rather concerned all societal spheres affected by the increasing digitalisation.

Thirdly, from mid-1997, the first inscriptions<sup>79</sup> of these ideas started to appear in official texts of UNESCO and its governing bodies, for example a document of UNESCO’s 151<sup>st</sup> Executive Board session that proposed a plan for action and contained many new elements clearly bearing the new director’s signature: First of all, it introduced his idea that “fair use” exemptions to copyright, a principle that exists in US law and allows for limited use of copyrighted material without prior consent from the right holders, mainly for the purposes of critique, commentary, scholarship or research; similar copyright exemptions exist in most other countries. In addition, the document called for the development of a strong public domain in cyberspace and introduced the term “Global Cyber Commons”, and thus another concept that Quéau had coined to emphasise the prioritisation of public over private interests in cyberspace.<sup>80</sup> And although the tone of the official documents was significantly less alarming than the internal memos circulated earlier, the new market-critical perspective started to characterise UNESCO’s position on the subject.

The public communication and translation of these ideas was further reinforced through publications prepared and signed by Quéau who —as one of his colleagues put it— “was bubbling with ideas and was a good writer, who writes a lot and everywhere”<sup>81</sup>. Both in UNESCO’s own publications and in external publications, Quéau promoted his position

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<sup>78</sup> UNESCO, “Info-Thoughts: A discussion paper”, High-Level Expert Group on Information Highways, 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, 7 March 1997 (UA: CI/INF/201).

<sup>79</sup> Recall that, in ANT-tradition, inscriptions are the efforts of an actor to fix an alignment of interests, achieved through processes of translation, in a stable way, for example in a statement or official document.

<sup>80</sup> UNESCO, “The implementation of the 150 EX/Decision 3.5.1 concerning the challenges of the Information Highways: The role of UNESCO”, 151 EX/16, 21 April 1997 (UNESDOC).

<sup>81</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview.

regarding IPRs, the public domain, information as a global public good and citizenship in cyberspace through short articles and opinion pieces.<sup>82</sup> As a result, some of the points raised became associated with UNESCO's overall position on the subject and were increasingly picked up and further spread by other actors within the organisation. Thus, Quéau's market-critical perspective on the challenges of the information society clearly started to shape UNESCO's institutional discourse on all policy issues related to digital information, marking the first successful "discourse structuration", defined—in ADA tradition—as the moment "when a discourse starts to dominate the way a given social unit [...] conceptualizes the world".<sup>83</sup>

Fourthly, the translation of this critical approach to the information economy was additionally fostered through Quéau's efforts to bring together a network of like-minded experts, who not only shared many of his convictions but also helped him to further refine them. Thus, some of the participants invited to the INFOethics conferences were practitioners and academics with whom Quéau had already worked during his time as a director at INA.<sup>84</sup> They, and many of the other experts, presented research and opinion statements on the same issues as those which Quéau had introduced in UNESCO, such as the extension of fair use exemptions to the online space, the public domain, free and open software, and information as a global good. They often applied the same storylines and arguments as those used by Quéau. Thus, due to their shared understanding of the issues at stake, they formed a discourse coalition<sup>85</sup> which contributed to the broader acceptance of the discourse initially only promoted by Quéau and his team at the CII/INF Division.

And lastly, the CII Sector used its newly setup web portal to publish and circulate opinion pieces of which many took up the topics discussed at the INFOethics debates. The creation of the website had been one of Quéau's first acts after his appointment in

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<sup>82</sup> For example: Philippe Quéau, "Cyberspace: Arbitrary Interference?", *UNESCO Sources* 107 (1998): 7-8; Philippe Quéau, "Whose Bright Idea Is That?", *UNESCO Sources* 117 (1999): 4-5; Philippe Quéau, "For a World of Cyber Citizens", *UNESCO Sources* 129 (2000): 4-5.

<sup>83</sup> Marteen Hajer, "Coalitions, Practices, and Meaning in Environmental Politics: From Acid Rain to BSE", in *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, ed. Jacob Torfing and David Howarth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 303.

<sup>84</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview; Quéau, Personal interview.

<sup>85</sup> Recall that a discourse coalition is defined as "a group of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of practices, shares the usage of a particular set of storylines over a particular period of time" (Hajer, "Doing Discourse Analysis: Coalitions, Practices, Meaning", 70).

summer 1996 and was released in January 1997.<sup>86</sup> Until this moment, UNESCO had only had a basic general website with very little content and no separate websites for the organisation's five programme sectors. The name of the new CII website, "webworld", expressed the aim for the website to be developed into a large virtual database for all kind of information concerning CII's fields of competence. Under the heading "Points of view", the sector posted a number of short texts that were aimed at facilitating the exchange of opinions on the different subjects pertaining to information and communication. Yet, most of the early comments were authored by Quéau himself or by selected experts from the INFOethics conferences who shared Quéau's interests and ideas. It was only in later years that other authors also joined, thereby leading to the representation of a broader range of perspectives.<sup>87</sup> Many of these texts are particularly interesting for the analysis of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society as they provide a detailed elaboration of the arguments and perspectives expressed in official documents of the same period.

The following figure visualises the various elements that constitute the performative dimension of the episode. It shows how, during the INFOethics conference series, the conception of information ethics developed from a very basic to a significantly larger understanding of the problems involved. In addition, it illustrates the impact of the recruitment of Philippe Quéau as the new director for the CII/INF on the information society and shows that the division's strategies for "translating" the ideas proposed by him were closely related to the INFOethics debates:

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<sup>86</sup> Quéau, Personal interview. An early version of the website is available via the Internet Archive: <https://web.archive.org/web/19970725120858/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/> (last accessed 20 October 2014).

<sup>87</sup> <https://web.archive.org/web/20021213104218/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/index.shtml> (last accessed 20 October 2014).

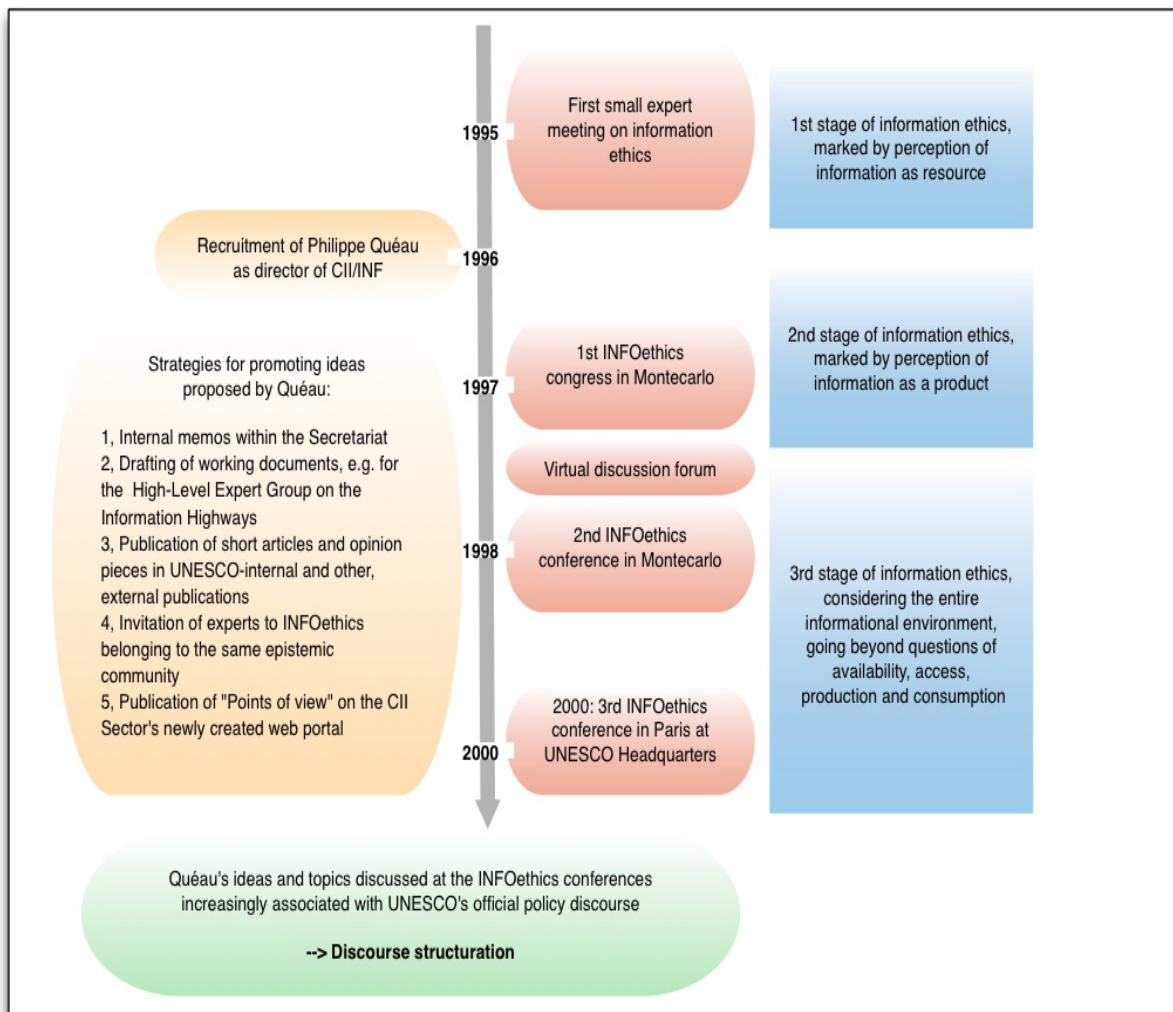


Figure 10: Performative dimension of UNESCO's search for ideas and values in the information society

From the above figure, it appears that the only influential actors during this first episode were some few members of the UNESCO Secretariat and the experts involved in the INFOethics conferences who significantly contributed to shaping and structuring UNESCO's policy discourse. A pivotal role was played by the new director of CII/INF, Philippe Quéau. As well as being the driving force behind the INFOethics conference series thanks to his innovative but often very controversial arguments, he was also the instigator of many ideas that eventually characterised the organisation's official position during this early phase in which the organisation was in need of new input and initiatives. However, welcomed initially by the CII staff as a "visionary of the information society"<sup>88</sup>, Quéau's radically critical position with regard to the commercialisation of the Internet and the entire informational environment soon caused tensions both within the UNESCO Secretariat and between UNESCO and its member states. While these tensions became

<sup>88</sup> Axel Plathe, Personal interview, 8 November 2013.

more apparent in the two later episodes and are therefore analysed in the second and third empirical chapters, the following analysis of the discursive dimension looks more closely at the epistemic issues and storylines that emerged during this early episode of UNESCO's policy discourse.

### **1.3 Analysis of the discursive dimension: The beginning of a policy discourse on the information society**

In contrast to the strong influence of experts and the UNESCO Secretariat, the organisation's member states were only marginally involved in the process of searching for and identifying ideas and values that should guide UNESCO's position on the information society. As a consequence, the episode under scrutiny in this chapter was not characterised by any political tension between the governmental delegates or between member states and the Secretariat. Instead, it was a phase of joint brainstorming on topics and issues to be dealt with, in which the organisation was able to develop and test new ideas and possible solutions to the identified problems without immediately seeking the consent of member states. For this reason, the analysis of the discursive dimension of this episode focused less on assessing the exchanges of arguments among actors than on identifying and categorising the various issues raised during the various debates and the main arguments linked to them.

From all the topics identified during the discourse analysis, it was possible to single out three major emblematic issues that dominated the debates and publications of this first episode:

- (1) the ethical policy approach to the information society;
- (2) the public domain and the information commons;
- (3) the information gap.

Each of these issues was used to refer to a more complex set of problems for which it could be considered as emblematic.<sup>89</sup> In addition, each had a set of subordinated issues linked to it that were part of the same complex of problems but appeared less prominent

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<sup>89</sup> Recall that, according to ADA, emblematic issues are used as vehicles to discuss more complex sets of problems by reducing them to more simple issues which are representative for the understanding of the bigger "problématique". Through reference to these emblematic issues, actors are able to exchange opinions and develop solutions, which ideally address the issues in their full complexity.



in the debates and official statements. The discursive analysis of these subordinated issues was therefore less detailed; yet, their consideration was useful in understanding the full complexity of the larger problem behind the three main emblematic issues.

Furthermore, for all three emblematic issues identified, a number of parallel storylines have been drawn.<sup>90</sup> Each of these storylines represents a different perspective on the same issue. Some of the different storylines on the same issue are complementary; others are contradictory or even opposed to one another. Hence, they illustrate the potential misunderstandings that could arise if different actors associated entirely different interpretations with the same epistemic issue.

The argumentative discourse analysis of this episode is based on all available documentation that reflects UNESCO's early search for ideas and values pertaining to the information society. This includes all main publications of the CII Sector of the period under scrutiny (in particular the first strategy and position statements), comments and contributions received as input to the Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy and all opinion pieces published on the CII websites that were related to the topic of the information society. Most importantly, the analysis centres on the contributions to the INFOethics conferences. In total, 83 documents, whose lengths range from 0.5 to 30 pages, have been coded, resulting in 600 text excerpts categorised by 25 different codes.

### **The ethical policy approach to the information society**

The analysis of the performative dimensions showed that most of UNESCO's early efforts concentrated on identifying and defining a role for the organisation to play vis-à-vis the challenges and chances pertaining to digital technology and, more generally, to the information society. But while UNESCO's first debates centred on information highways and, thus, on technical infrastructures and the privatisation of Internet-related services and tools, the focus soon shifted to problems related to content and usages of digital technologies.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> According to ADA, storylines can be seen as some kind of condensed statements that summarise more complex issues and narratives and are used by actors as short-hands in discussions. They evoke associations of the larger narrative in the mind of the readers and listeners without having to describe the issue in full detail.

<sup>91</sup> This was well expressed by a comment made during the debates of the Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy in 1994: "The term 'new technologies' is a misnomer: one should refer instead to new usages of technologies. The innovative aspect is the growing importance of telecommunication networks and greater possibilities for different types of services and products (including in education and cultural

Even though this perspective was fully in line with UNESCO's intellectual mandate, it was still a very unique choice at a time when most international policy debates tackled technological, operational or commercial matters related to the growth of the Internet and the information economy. In order to emphasise this unique priority and deliberately distance itself from the policy approach of other organisations and the bulk of national governments, UNESCO chose to concentrate on ethical and social questions related to the Internet and the legal issues arising from them:

“Seuls sont évoqués, le plus souvent, les aspects économiques de l'expansion des réseaux d'information, alors que ce sont leurs fondements éthiques et leurs implications sociales qui doivent faire l'objet du plus large débat.”<sup>92</sup>

By focusing only on ethical, as well as related societal and cultural, questions, the organisation aimed at considering the fundamental consequences that the growing pervasiveness of digital technologies and their usage could have for its field of mandate:

“When listening to the call for clearer policy guidelines, urgently needed in the increasingly open ‘global information context’, it should be carefully considered that today most of the national and international debate is concentrating solely on technological and economic aspects; undoubtedly for their impact is today more immediately perceived. But, as we know, this happens at apparent detriment of other aspects. Aspects that will have, in the medium and long run, a deeper, more essential significance; the social, cultural, ethical aspects we are urged to reflect upon, and which will lead to fundamental consequences in the field of education, participation to social life, and self-determination of one's existence.”<sup>93</sup>

This choice of attention was closely related to the organisation of the INFOethics conference series, which constituted the main element of the performative dimension of this episode. Consequently, the ethical aspects of the information society can be considered as the first emblematic issue for this early episode of UNESCO's information society discourse. This also explains why the organisation never officially defined what is meant by “information ethics”. Instead, references to “ethical questions” and the “moral role” of UNESCO were vaguely used to describe and justify a perspective that did not reduce the problems of the information society to pure technology and market-related

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fields) on an industrial scale.” UNESCO, “CII Working Group on the Medium-Term Plan, Synthesis of the First Meeting”, draft, CII/UCE, 15 April 1994 (UA: CI/INF/198).

<sup>92</sup> UNESCO, “Sous le signe du paradoxe”, Draft contribution of the Director-General of UNESCO to the supplement “Where is the Internet Leading the World” of the World Media Network, 1997, CII/INF/AP/97.280 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>93</sup> Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, “Opening Address”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, 57.

aspects; instead, it tried to resist this one-sided perspective and lay the foundations for more inclusive principles of global governance:

“L’infoéthique est une discipline toute jeune. Elle cherche à fonder les principes généraux d’une gouvernance mondiale. [...] Elle nous incite à la vigilance et à la résistance, face aux forces aveugles, déchaînées par les bouleversements techniques, économiques, financiers, liés à la mise en place progressive de la société mondiale de l’information.”<sup>94</sup>

Although UNESCO’s perception of information ethics developed over the years from a very basic to a more advanced and nuanced understanding of the ethical challenges, it is possible to identify three major storylines, which, over the entire period, were recurrently used in order to describe UNESCO’s role and responsibility with regard to an ethical policy approach to the information society.

#### *Information ethics as dialogue about shared principles*

The most common perspective on information ethics, which was also the most dominant perspective in UNESCO’s debates and documents, considers that an ethical approach to the information society should consist in the search for common values and fundamental principles to guide all behaviour in the information society:

“The search for a solution to these challenges requires the *formulation of new ethical norms* to be applicable to a new information society. It is necessary to foster, under the auspices of UNESCO, *universal moral principles* and distill from them appropriate guidelines for clear and concrete actions for the future development of information technologies. However, this undertaking will require a determination of which values and which objectives should be given precedence. [...] These ethical challenges require a *delicate balance between many and frequently diverse values* with a view to achieving a satisfactory solution, which would fully respect the fundamental rights as well as protect the essential values of society [emphasis added].”<sup>95</sup>

Part of this storyline was that in a complex and increasingly globalised world, marked by different traditions, religions and beliefs, the search for common values could not be completed by only one group of actors or by a single institution, not even by UNESCO. In order to reach a balance between diverse and sometimes competing values, this search

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<sup>94</sup> Philippe Quéau, “INFOéthique 98”, Communiqué de Presse, 1998 (Web archive “INFOethics 1998”).

<sup>95</sup> Bernd Niehaus (Vice-President of ECOSOC 2000), “Closing Address”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, 336.

needed to emerge out of a continuous, open and international dialogue. Only then there would be hope that the resulting ethical principles could be largely accepted:

“[W]hat is the best way for UNESCO to serve as a role model in all the countries, which belong to it? One point of entry could possibly be through discourse ethics or consensus ethics. Discourse ethics reach conclusions on correct ethical action through open intellectual discussion, in which everyone discusses an issue from the same starting-point. What everyone involved in that discussion can agree upon is deemed to be a point to build from. Imagine that UNESCO could launch such a process, thereby opening dialogue on the various principles produced by this conference on the topic of info-ethics.”<sup>96</sup>

As a consequence, this perspective can be summarised as the storyline of *information ethics fosters dialogue and reflection on shared values and moral principles guiding the behaviour and decision-making in the digital environment*. It was not only the perspective of most participants of the three INFOethics conferences, and thus the common basis for debates on more particular topics; it was also the most nuanced approach to information ethics that can be identified for UNESCO’s debates on the matter.

For this reason, after the first INFOethics congress in 1997, it was this perspective that was officially communicated by UNESCO in its statements, articles and official documents. By emphasising its focus on ethical and societal questions of the information society, UNESCO tried to evoke in the mind of the readers and listeners the idea that the organisation was approaching the arising problems on a sort of meta-level, consisting in the search for overarching values that should guide any political and economic response to the new technological and informational environment.

#### *Information ethics as opposition to economic interests*

Although it is not possible to identify any perspectives that would be entirely opposed to this first storyline, there were some variations of it. Each of these variations shifted the general discourse about information ethics in a different direction, creating the potential risk of misunderstanding and conflict. The first variation is related to a more pronounced perception of the opposition between ethical and commercial principles. Presenting the ethical approach as a counterweight to the dominant neo-liberal policy thinking characterised by privatisation and deregulation, this variation can, hence, be summarised as the storyline of *information ethics develops criteria of decision-making that put public before private interests*:

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<sup>96</sup> Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, “Closing Address”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and Proceedings*, 341.

“The *commercialization of any form of social interaction weakens the ‘res publica’* and the philosophical and ethical values attaching [*sic*] to it. The search for virtue, which in Greek philosophy is conceived as a thing eminently public, is in peril of becoming a purely private affair. The emerging new culture should confront this development and be in a position to *offer the global society instead a system of moral principles that are appropriate to the global information society* while yet based on the central values of equality, freedom and human dignity. This is the new ‘infoethics’ [emphasis added].”<sup>97</sup>

Part of this narrative is also that such an approach needed to include information users and all citizens in general in all decision-making and norm-building processes. Within UNESCO and the INFOethics conferences, this idea was most prominently represented by Philippe Quéau, director of CII/INF, but was also visible in contributions of some other conference speakers belonging to the same epistemic community. In a more moderate version, it was even taken on by UNESCO’s then Director-General Mayor, for example in his opening speech to the INFOethics congress in 1997:

“Si nous voulons dire ‘oui’ à l’économie de marché et ‘non’ à la société de marché, il faut que les citoyens se fassent entendre, soient les protagonistes du débat, décident de leurs propres choix.”

He later added in English:

“We lack guiding principles and too often assimilate value to price. [...] One of the main ethical/legal challenges will be to strike a proper balance between the protection of owners’ and users’ rights in a domain marked by numerous divergences of interest, philosophy, and practice.”<sup>98</sup>

In view of the general market-critical tendency that is visible in all of UNESCO’s ethics programmes, this perception of information ethics was not hugely surprising. In addition, it was, in many ways, compatible with the more dominant storyline of information ethics as an open dialogue on shared values. However, in some cases, the critical tendency was pushed a bit further and led to another variation of the main storyline around information ethics that shifted its meaning significantly.

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<sup>97</sup> Philippe Quéau, “Cyberculture and infoethics”, in UNESCO, *World Culture Report 1998: culture, creativity and markets* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1998), 245.

<sup>98</sup> Federio Mayor, “Opening address”, INFOethics congress 1997 (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”). While the Director-General’s official speeches are often prepared by the unit or sector in charge of the topic, Mayor reportedly formulated this particular opening address himself and positively surprised some of the CII/INF staff with his market-critical comments (Montviloff, Personal interview).

### *Information ethics as a code of conduct*

This was the case when ethics was framed as a “code of conduct” formed by laws or strict enforceable rules. In its early days, information ethics had indeed often been understood as a framework guiding the professional practice of information experts. As such, it had led to a number of professional codes of ethics supposed to regulate the responsibility of information professionals towards the users.<sup>99</sup> Transferring this understanding to the international level and the broader range of topics covered by UNESCO’s ethical reflection, some actors were inclined to interpret *information ethics as the formulation of a code of norms that regulates behaviour and decision-making in the digital environment*.

This perspective is particularly interesting as it appeared in UNESCO’s debates —with a few exceptions— mostly as a storyline from which actors tried to distance themselves, and thus as some kind of negative scenario used to illustrate what information ethics should not be conceived as:

*“Information ethics [...] cannot result in a new (single) world order of information behaviour, but can be a permanent world-wide process of exchange of positions between people who are involved in structuring the new information world. The global information society is thus a platform for information ethics and the result of the discussion cannot be a single world information ethics but the development of an ethos that makes the public aware and sensitive of the need to take a responsible and not only merely economically determined approach towards information, its production, distribution and usage [emphasis added].”<sup>100</sup>*

UNESCO and the CII staff in charge of the information ethics programme did sense the risk related to an understanding of information ethics as a firm code of norms, which — in an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO— would necessarily lead to political tensions and conflicts. While some member states could try to use the code or the strict norms in order to introduce their jurisdiction in other countries, others might refuse any kind of ethical agreement in order to avoid such a scenario:

*“UNESCO has 186 Member States and it would be very dangerous to try to impose the laws or rules of conduct of one nation or group of States on the entire cyberspace. There would be disproportionate negative resistance.”<sup>101</sup>*

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<sup>99</sup> For example the Code of Ethics for Information Scientists of the American Society for Information Science, or the Code of Ethics adopted by the Society of Professional Journalists. For more details on this kind of non-binding professional codes on information ethics see Kuhlen, “Informationsethik”; Sturges, “Information Ethics in the Twenty First Century.”

<sup>100</sup> Kuhlen, “VF-INFOethics: Links from INFOethics ’97 to INFOethics ’98.” in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and Proceedings*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> Henrikas Yushkiavitchus, “Opening Address”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and Proceedings*, 43.

Yet, despite the repeated negation by UNESCO and other INFOethics participants, the idea that UNESCO was using the information ethics debates in order to impose strict norms and rules on the international community persisted and did not cede to cause controversies within the organisation.

For the sake of completeness, it is necessary to mention a forth and last variation of the dominant storyline about information ethics. Since it was, however, only expressed by a few representatives of the information economy (mostly from the US) during the first INFOethics congress in 1997, it can be considered an exception. It consisted in the perception of *information ethics as a question to be resolved by a deregulated market*, since it would be in the hands of companies to respond to consumers, their choices and demands. According to this perspective, regulation through public policies was only needed to assure security and stability for a market-led information economy.<sup>102</sup> Since this view did not have any visible influence on UNESCO's policy discourse on the subject, not even as a perspective from which to distance oneself, it is not further analysed here.

#### *Complex of problems behind the emblematic issue of information ethics*

Within the general context of information ethics, UNESCO discussed a number of subordinated topics, each of which merits a more detailed analysis. To name just the most important ones, these topics were the challenge of securing privacy and confidentiality in the digital environment, the problem of freedom of expression and content-regulation on the Internet, and the question of free access to information as a fundamental right. For each of these topics, it would be possible to identify several often competing perspectives expressed in the INFOethics debates or in UNESCO's other brainstorming activities. But all these perspectives can be ascribed to one of the three major storylines identified for the overarching topic of information ethics. Hence, they can be considered as part of the same complex of problems for which the topic of information ethics was often referred to in an emblematic way.

Concerning the problem of online privacy and confidentiality, some vague statements followed the first identified storyline and the idea that an *open dialogue* is needed to reach a balanced, ethical approach on which to base regulations and policies. This open dialogue

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<sup>102</sup> This storyline is visible in the three contributions by Robert Kahn, Patrice Lyons and Jeffrey Ritter at the INFOethics conference in 1997 (Web archive "INFOethics 1997"). For a first-hand account of these presentations see Kuhlen, "Das Ethos der Informationsgesellschaft ist das Internet"; Metze-Mangold, "'Info-Ethics' im Zeitalter des Internet: die UNESCO tastet sich vor".

could, for instance, take the form of an “international debate on the human rights issues of the coming information age, including the rights to information access and to information privacy”.<sup>103</sup>

Yet, when the topic came up in the debate, most actors eventually followed the second above-identified storyline; they expressed the view that, in order to protect privacy online, the *interest of citizens and users needed to take priority over private interests* and not only rely on economic and technological criteria:

“It would be a grave mistake for UNESCO and the human rights community generally to turn its back on these well established legal norms and leave the protection of privacy to the cold logic of the marketplace and the technical methods that are intended to promote the disclosure of greater amounts of personal data.”<sup>104</sup>

Interestingly, the perspective expressed through the third storyline —namely that *debates on information ethics are aimed at formulating norms*— was also much more pronounced in the exchanges on privacy than on general debates on information ethics. In contrast to the meta-discussions on the objectives and competing understandings of norms and values, when it came to the concrete subject of online privacy and security, many speakers called for the creation of concrete laws that would inscribe the prioritisation of individual rights over commercial interests:

“Problems of integrity, of privacy and security of data will not be resolved because of the very forces of the market and technology. Indeed, the forces in question are turned towards maximum profits, not the maximum protection of individuals. We therefore need laws which oblige organizations collecting personal data to provide the concerned individuals with right of access to it. They should be allowed to correct or withhold [*sic*] information, and this in the name of a moral right of each individual to his or her digital representation.”<sup>105</sup>

Yet, most statements calling for laws or international binding norms referred, in some way or another, to already existing normative frameworks, in particular the Universal

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<sup>103</sup> This vague stipulation can be found in some of UNESCO’s early position statements, for instance UNESCO, “UNESCO and an Information Society for all. A position paper”, CII-96/WS/4, May 1996 (UNESDOC) and UNESCO, “The challenges of the Information Highways: The role of UNESCO”, 150 EX/15, 16 August 1996 (UNESDOC).

<sup>104</sup> Marc Rotenberg, “Preserving privacy in the Information Society”, opinion piece published on CII Webworld, no date, [https://web.archive.org/web/20001118001700/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/points\\_of\\_views/rotenberg\\_1.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20001118001700/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/points_of_views/rotenberg_1.html) (last accessed 24 October 2014). A similar standpoint is expressed by the same author with regard to confidentiality: “Commercialization of the Internet also poses the threat that rights which would otherwise be protected in the political sphere will be turned over to the marketplace and individuals will be forced to pay for services that might otherwise be routinely provided. A critical example is the confidentiality of correspondence” (Marc Rothenberg, “Protecting Human Dignity in the Digital Age”, study prepared for INFOethics 2000, Paris, 2000, 3 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>105</sup> Quéau, “Cyberspace: Arbitrary Interference?”, 8.



Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>106</sup> Evoking, in particular, Article 19 (Freedom of expression) and Article 12 (Right to privacy), speakers tried to underpin their demands for common norms and principles by recalling shared values upon which the international community had already agreed.

This makes clear that the difficulty of an intergovernmental dialogue on often vaguely defined ethical problems did not consist simply in finding appropriate solutions for the problems themselves. Rather, the main difficulty consisted in the (im)possibility of identifying ethical values on which UNESCO's member states—with their diverse cultures and traditions, implying different legal and moral frameworks—could agree. The difficulty was mainly due to the fact that, besides the different normative traditions, UNESCO's debates on ethical values also touched on concrete political and economic interests. This becomes more apparent when looking at the storylines pertaining to the second and third emblematic issues identified for this first episode of UNESCO's response to the information society.

The following figure visualises the different competing storylines on the emblematic issue of information ethics:

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<sup>106</sup> See for example: “Strong emphasis was placed on the need to ensure that the human rights principles already in place should be preserved and reinforced in the new digital environment and in cyberspace. In this context, the right of access to information for all remains a fundamental right that should be upheld with greater efficiency and imagination in a spirit of equity, justice and mutual respect.” (UNESCO, “Summary report” in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, 18.

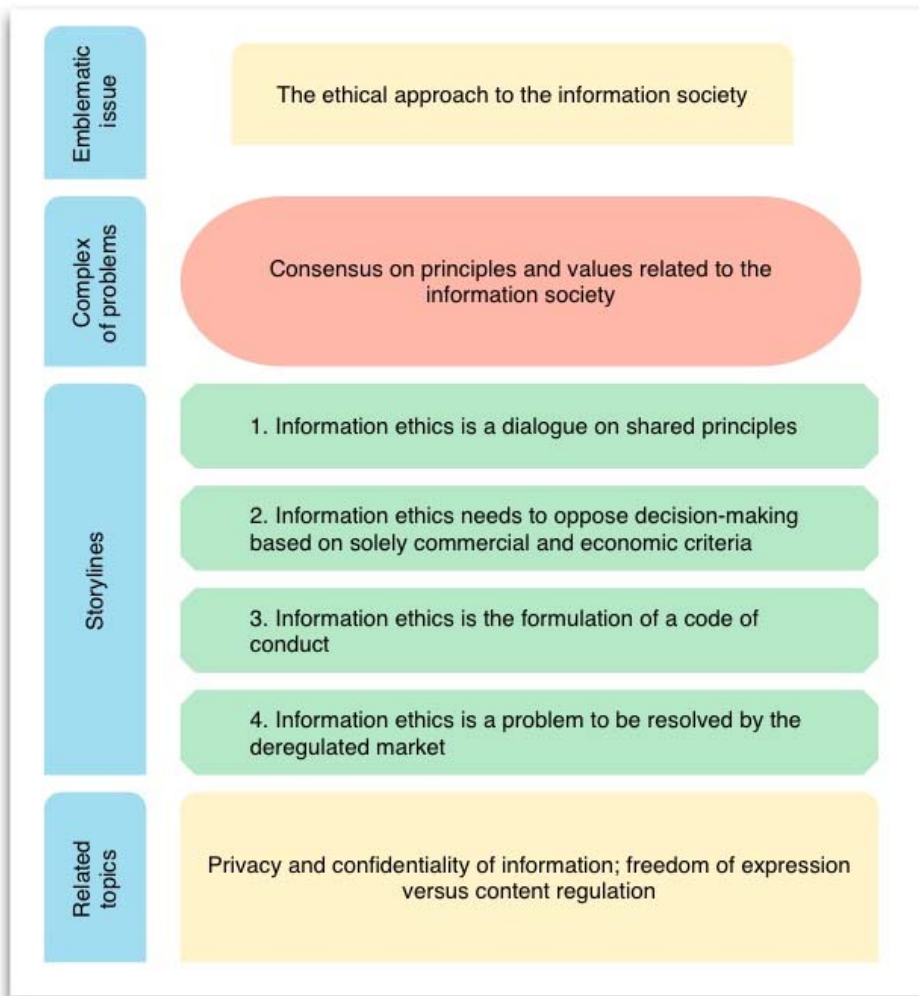


Figure 11: Emblematic issue: “The ethical policy approach to the information society”

### The public domain and the information commons

Within the debates on global values, many reflections and discussions dealt not only with moral values but also with material and social values, and, more precisely, with the broad question of the value of information in the digital environment. As a matter of fact, it is possible to relate many of the topics of the INFOethics conferences and in UNESCO’s early documents in some way to this key question. But there was one subject in particular that attracted much attention from various actors and that can, therefore, be considered an epistemic issue representing the large set of problems related to the value attributed to information: the subject of the “public domain” and “information as a public good”.

Unlike for the topic of information ethics, the focus on public domain information did not emerge out of the first brainstorming exercises of the CII Sector. Instead it was one

of the ideas put forward by Quéau after his appointment as director of CII's Information and Informatics division. But the new focus did not constitute a breach with UNESCO's other information related programmes. On the contrary, the debate about public domain information and about the responsibility of public authorities for granting access to information was in many ways in line with UNESCO's past and on-going information programmes, in particular the libraries, archives and information database projects carried out within PGI and all activities promoting national information policies. Moreover, the fundamental claim behind the debate on public domain information was not even exclusively linked to the new medium of the Internet; instead, it was a general concern related to the growing importance of information in globalised societies. However, it had gained new urgency as a result of the multiple and simplified solutions for accessing, copying and distributing information provided by digital technology.

After Quéau had introduced the subject within UNESCO in 1996<sup>107</sup>, it was soon picked up by other actors and discussed at length and in full detail during the INFOethics conference in 1998 and 2000, during which the public domain was one of the programme pillars. But, as was the case for information ethics, for this emblematic issue, the different actors did not base their arguments on a single common definition of "public domain information". Instead, the term "public domain" seemed to be used interchangeable with other concepts, such as "global public good" or "information commons" and often referred to different meanings in different contexts. Many of the misunderstandings and controversies that emerged within UNESCO about its role regarding public domain information appeared to be caused by this lack of a shared definition. Even an extensive study on the subject prepared by the New Zealand information law specialist Elizabeth Longworth in the run-up to the INFOethics conference in 2000, which attempted to categorise the different usages of the term, could not contribute to a better understanding of this important subject.<sup>108</sup>

Based on a historical analysis, Longworth mainly identified mainly three common understandings of what is meant by "public domain", which are all present in UNESCO's discourse on the subject:

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<sup>107</sup> While the notion appears in internal documents from 1996 onwards, the first official text mentioning that UNESCO should promote the public domain is a strategy document discussed during UNESCO's Executive Board meeting in April 1997 (UNESCO, "The Implementation of 150 EX/Decision 3.5.1 concerning the challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO", 151 EX/16, 21 April 1997 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth Longworth, "The Role of Public Authorities in Access to Information: The Broader and More Efficient Provision of Public Content", study prepared for INFOethics 2000, CII-2000/WS/4, Paris, 18 July 2000 (UNESDOC).

First, in its initial meaning, public domain was used to refer to publicly owned property, mostly land but also other tangible objects. Later, the dimension of “public interest” was added to this understanding of “public domain”, which then referred to publicly owned properties appropriated to public purposes. In this regard, it was similar to the notion of “commons”, which historically meant a stretch of land owned by the residents of a community who could jointly take profit of it.<sup>109</sup> Within UNESCO’s debates, this perspective was visible when information was mentioned in association with other common goods:

“Water, space, human genome, public domain cultural heritage, past inventions, ideas belong to the world public domain, the ‘res publica’ of the world. It is a very sensitive and deeply political subject that is directly linked to the essence of what constitutes and founds the global good.”<sup>110</sup>

Secondly, the term “public domain” was (and still is) often used to refer to the status of literature or inventions which are either not protected by copyright or whose copyright/patent has expired. Consequently, the term “public domain information” relates to any kind of information or product which can be used and distributed without infringing intellectual property rights.<sup>111</sup> This definition was very present in UNESCO’s exchanges on the subject, in particular when the debates came to tackle IPRs and copyright exemptions:

“The public domain in the information society includes all public data (laws, governmental reports, data produced from public funds, etc.), as well as all information that becomes public (classic works, works of authors who died more than 50 or 70 years ago), theses or scientific articles published by public laboratories, non-proprietary standards and software.”<sup>112</sup>

Thirdly and directly linked to the second understanding, public domain information was and is still often considered to be information generated or made available by governments and public authorities. This kind of “public content” —as it is also often referred to— can be included in documents produced by these authorities or information held in archives, libraries, museums and national registers, and similar types of works. Just

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>110</sup> Philippe Quéau, “Growing the public good”, opinion piece published on CII Webworld, no date, [https://web.archive.org/web/20010202070300/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/points\\_of\\_views/qu\\_eau\\_7.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20010202070300/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/points_of_views/qu_eau_7.html) (last accessed 27 October 2014). The term “res publica” is elsewhere defined as “la somme des domaines publics de chacun de ses états membres”, see Philippe Quéau, “INFOéthique 98”, Communiqué de Presse, 1998 (Web archive “INFOethics 1998”).

<sup>111</sup> Longworth, “The Role of Public Authorities in Access to Information: The Broader and More Efficient Provision of Public Content”, 5.

<sup>112</sup> UNESCO, “Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 30 C/31, 16 August 1999, 4 (UNESDOC).

like its definition as publicly owned property, this understanding of public domain information also often implied a notion of “public purpose or benefit”, leading to a definition of public domain information as a “public good” or as “information commons”.<sup>113</sup> This interpretation was used less frequently in UNESCO’s discussions. However, it was sometimes employed when public domain information was described as “intellectual commons” or as “global public good”:

“Public sector information forms part of our ‘intellectual commons’. It is critical for research, education, innovation, social and economic inclusion and is an essential foundation for an informed, participatory and global society. Such information is akin to a ‘global public goods’ and therefore should be presumed to be publicly available (that is, as in the ‘public domain’).”<sup>114</sup>

The arguments used in the context of UNESCO’s exchanges on the public domain often referred to either one definition or another, and were even more frequently based on a mix of all three identified understandings. Despite this, it is possible to identify three key storylines that summarise the various positions on the subject expressed in UNESCO documents and during the INFOethics conferences fairly well.

#### *Public domain information as a counterbalance to commercial information*

The first storyline articulates a perspective which recognised the social, ethical and economic value of information. Consequently, it recognised the need for both public domain and commercial information. To some extent, this perspective can be considered a logical continuation of the stance on the information economy that had shaped the activities carried out under UNESCO’s intergovernmental programme, PGI, during the late 1980s. It acknowledged that information could be considered both a resource and a commodity and that it was subject to both private and public interest:

“Un juste équilibre doit être trouvé entre les intérêts privés axés principalement sur la commercialisation de l’information et l’intérêt général qui exige qu’une

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<sup>113</sup> Longworth, “The Role of Public Authorities in Access to Information: The Broader and More Efficient Provision of Public Content”, 6f. In the cited study, Longworth identified many more understandings and different categories of public domain information. It would go beyond the aim of this chapter to outline them all and try to understand the concept of public domain in all its nuances. The quoted understandings are the most important ones and are sufficient for us to better assess UNESCO’s perception of the concept.

<sup>114</sup> UNESCO, “Summary report”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, 19.

partie de cette information appartienne au domaine public, et, par conséquent, demeure accessible à tous et partout dans le monde.”<sup>115</sup>

While this perspective usually called for a strong public domain, it also emphasised the important role of the information economy and the need for innovation and economic incentives. Therefore, this perspective can be summarised as the storyline of *Public domain information needs to counterbalance commercial information for the benefit of society and economy at large*. Part of this storyline was also that it had to be the responsibility of governments and public authorities to guarantee a fair balance between public and commercial information (“The public domain is increasingly subject to privatisation. Governments must counterbalance this development.”<sup>116</sup>). Accordingly, governments should not respond to the commercialisation of the Internet and the strong neo-liberal policy approaches of most developed countries by reinforcing the regulation of the online space; instead, the balance should be achieved through augmenting and promoting information pertaining to the public domain:

“Le rôle du secteur public serait alors celui du correcteur du marché. Rôle positif dans certain sens, mais avec des caractéristiques perverses du fait que le marché ne peut pas accomplir des rôles qui vont au delà du but lucratif dont il s’inspire de façon légitime. [...] Il s’agit en fin de comptes de *défendre ce qu’on appelle dans d’autres secteurs le modèle dualiste et complémentaire*. L’initiative privée joue un rôle indispensable, même à travers le paiement de tarifs par les usagers. Simultanément, le secteur public offre des renseignements et des documents de qualité et gratuits qui garantissent l’égalité des citoyens face à la société de l’information [emphasis added].”<sup>117</sup>

As well as being the most moderate and most nuanced storyline on public domain information, it also appeared to be the most dominant among participants of the INFOethics conferences. Moreover, it represented the compromise between the other two perspectives on the value of information that are visible in UNESCO’s debates on information ethics.

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<sup>115</sup> Alain Modoux, “Opening speech”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and Proceedings*, 62.

<sup>116</sup> Philippe Quéau, “Cyberculture and infoethics”, 245.

<sup>117</sup> Tomas de la Quadra Salcedo, “Pour la définition d’un nouvel engagement des pouvoirs publics avec la société de l’information”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and proceedings*, 81ff.

### *Information as a global common good*

While the above-described storyline admitted that commercial information was a necessary and important element of the information society, not only for private benefits but also for the public benefit, it is possible to identify a significantly more critical position on the subject. From this perspective, information was never considered a commodity but always a public resource to which access should be as free and as wide as possible. Consequently, public domain information was not simply there to counterbalance commercially distributed information, but represented an important —if not the most important— instrument to fight social and global inequality caused by liberalised market forces. Accordant statements often had a very alarmist tone and warned about what could happen if the global community and national authorities did not seek appropriate solutions for this problem:

“Parce qu’elle est à l’évidence un phénomène de portée mondiale, la société de l’information pose de manière très concrète un problème nouveau, celui du ‘bien commun mondial’ et de sa régulation. [...] *Le bien commun, s’il n’est pas promu et défendu, ne peut que déperir.* Ce faisant, ce sont des ‘maux communs’ (‘Global Bads’) qui apparaissent alors. Ces maux communs circulent à la vitesse de la mondialisation. Ils augmentent les risques de dysfonctionnement systémique global. [...] *Si les États ne se préoccupent pas de renforcer le bien commun mondial, c’est le mal commun mondial qui va s’étendre* [emphasis added].”<sup>118</sup>

The storyline underlying this perspective can be described as: *Public domain information is a public good and as such part of the global commons that need to be protected.* The director of CII/INF, Philippe Quéau, who promoted this perspective and appeared to have by far the most developed standpoint on the matter, often referred to the “tragedy of the commons” to illustrate the danger for the public domain if nobody takes responsibility for it:

“Aujourd’hui le domaine public est menacé. C’est la fameuse ‘tragédie du bien commun’. Quand quelque chose n’appartient à personne (*res nullius*) ou au contraire à tout le monde (*res communis*), personne ne se sent concerné en particulier pour en prendre la défense, ou en assurer le bon usage.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Philippe Quéau, “Closing speech”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and proceedings*, 339ff.

<sup>119</sup> Philippe Quéau, “INFOéthique 98”, Communiqué de Presse, 1998 (Web archive “INFOethics 1998”). The economics theory about the “tragedy of the commons” was introduced by the ecologist Garrett Hardin in 1968 in an article published in the journal *Science*. Since then, it has been used to describe a number of problems all related to the common usage of shared resources, such as air, water, forests, energy, oceans but information and knowledge commons. Most prominently, it was picked up by the American political scientist Elinor Ostrom who, in 2009, received the Nobel prize in Economic Sciences for her work on the management of common property (Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* [Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 2ff).

Like the more moderate perspective described above, this storyline about public domain information also considered it to be the role and responsibility of governments, public authorities and the international community to preserve and expand the information commons:

“As the guardians and interpreters of the ‘public interest’, public authorities have a responsibility to the citizens on whose behalf they act to: resist the enclosure of the intellectual commons and preserve existing resources of public domain information; expand the proportion and improve the quality of knowledge resources that are available to the public; facilitate more equitable access to this information.”<sup>120</sup>

Consequently, the main difference between this view and the first perspective, which saw public domain information as a counterbalance to commercial information, did not consist in the solutions proposed to solve the problem of the public domain. Rather, they differed with regard to their views on the economic value of information and the more moderate perspective’s acknowledgment that, in a globalised information society, commercial information had an important role to play too.

### *Information as an economic resource*

The third and last perspective on the value of information can be positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum. This perspective, expressed by the private sector representatives present during the first and third INFOethics conferences in 1997 and 2000, deliberately defined information in economic terms only. Instead of emphasising its public, social or ethical value, in this perspective, information was related to its monetary characteristics:

“[I]nformation is becoming the economic currency — the global coin of the realm of cyberspace. And, as an asset with economic value, in digital form, information becomes even more defined by its monetary characteristics than by its values for education, research or development [emphasis added].”<sup>121</sup>

Consequently, this perspective —which can be summarised as the storyline of *information is an economic resource*— opposed the perception of information as a natural resource and a common good:

“Distinguished from the resources of power and water, however, information is not a *natural* resource. Instead, it finds its origin in the creative activities of

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<sup>120</sup> UNESCO, “Summary report”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and proceedings*, 19.

<sup>121</sup> Jeffrey Ritter, “Private sector leadership in global policy reform” (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”).



humankind. In our writing, coding, processing, banking, artistic creating and other activities that produce intellectual capital, information (and its inherent value to facilitating economic development) has already evolved during this century as a resource for which its distribution is not governed by the pragmatics of its physical location, but by the policy structures and legal systems which define the rights of ownership, and the rights to protect ownership, in the information. Information is, without question, an *economic* resource [emphasis in original].”<sup>122</sup>

Ironically, albeit entirely opposed to the other two storylines, this perspective did not call for self-regulation of the market but considered it to be governments’ responsibility to intervene in the information economy. But instead of counterbalancing economic interests, this intervention should consist in creating frameworks that would allow for stability and, hence, for more growth of the information market:

“But governments and commerce find a mutuality in their desire to achieve progress; what is required is to incorporate the attributes of successful process into authentic models that can allow governments to either defer to regulatory products developed within commerce (such as widely accepted model agreements, commercial codes of conduct, innovative dispute resolution mechanisms) or, as appropriate, to accept and enact into law model regulations which facilitate a harmonized environment. The resulting predictability thereby overcomes the reluctance of capital to invest in market growth and innovation.”<sup>123</sup>

It needs to be mentioned that, although this perspective was expressed during the INFOethics conference, the idea did not spread within UNESCO. Instead, it was once more a position from which many actors tried to distance themselves. But as such, it significantly influenced UNESCO’s official policy discourse, which opposed many aspects of the storyline of “information as an economic resource”. This becomes even more evident when looking at the larger complex of problems for which the discussion on public domain information served as an emblematic issue.

#### *Complex of problems behind the emblematic issue of the public domain*

The importance of public domain information was not the only topic through which UNESCO discussed the role of information in society. The different positions and storylines about the public domain illustrated and exemplified the larger complex of issues related to the value and ownership of information. The other two most prominent topics

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

discussed in the same context were the large sets of questions related to Intellectual Property Rights and their exemptions, in particular the fair use principle, and the topic of free and open software. In particular, the first one was often discussed at length within UNESCO and also provoked some heated exchanges during the INFOethics conferences.<sup>124</sup> But the perspectives leading to the competing storylines about IPRs and copyright exemptions are, however, the same as those identified for the topic of the public domain and therefore represented emblematically by them. Nevertheless, a short overview is useful for better understanding the competing positions on the value of information.

Just like for public domain information, the moderate position on IPRs was characterised by the idea that, in order to guarantee a *balance between private and public interests*, there should be a balance between works protected by copyright and those that are freely accessible. This becomes particularly important in the digital environment where copying and distribution is significantly simpler than in analogue times:

“Copyright therefore relies on balancing the interests of protecting original works and their creators and guaranteeing public interest and fundamental freedoms (such as access to culture and freedom of speech). Present developments in intellectual property, especially in the field of copyright and neighbouring rights, could threaten this balance. It is also true however that new technologies represent a threat for the normal exploitation of copyright-protected works. The preservation of this balance between the legitimate interests of the right holders and the equally legitimate interests of users to have access to information and culture, is of crucial importance in the framework of the Information Society.”<sup>125</sup>

Part of the narrative was that copyright exemptions, such as the fair use principle, need to be preserved in the digital environment but should not be extended beyond the existing rules:

“The ‘fair use’ provision of the US Copyright Act allows reproduction and other uses of copyrighted works for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching [...], scholarship or research. [...] The preservation and continuation of these balanced rights in an electronic environment, as well as in

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<sup>124</sup> Free and open software was a much less central theme within UNESCO than IPRs and is therefore not discussed in more detail in this chapter. There are, however, some very interesting arguments linked to it. For the diverging positions on the subject, see, in particular, Richard Stallman, “Free software and beyond”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and proceedings*, 65-71. For a more balanced viewpoint, see also Teresa Fuentes and Bruno de Padirac, “Les logiciels ‘libres’: Plus de démocratie ou d’argent dans la société de l’information?”, opinion piece published on CII Webworld, no date, [https://web.archive.org/web/20001013143227/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/index.shtml#points\\_of\\_views](https://web.archive.org/web/20001013143227/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/publications/index.shtml#points_of_views) (last accessed 27 October 2014).

<sup>125</sup> UNESCO, “Summary report”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and proceedings*, 23.

traditional formats, are essential to the free flow of information and to the development of an information infrastructure that serves the public interest.”<sup>126</sup>

In contrast to this, the perspective based on the idea of *information being a global public good and part of the global commons* was characterised by a much more critical view on IPRs since it perceived the persistence and reinforcement of copyright as being contrary to the public interest:

“‘Intellectual property’ is a recent, western expression. It implies individual ownership whereas for thousands of years, ideas and texts were considered community property. [...] The public domain is however in danger. Over the last decade we have seen a steady reinforcement of intellectual property rights without a counterweight in favour of our communal knowledge base. The system is out of balance.”<sup>127</sup>

Consequently, part of this narrative was that copyright exemptions needed to be extended because they guarantee the protection of fundamental rights and, eventually, contribute to the common good:

“Exemptions based on fundamental freedoms or on considerations of public interest must continue to exist in the Information Society, or even be adapted to that specific environment. Access to information, research and the transmission of knowledge and culture may justify the introduction of new exceptions to and limitations on copyright as well as the extension of existing exceptions. [...] Enjoyment of exemptions cannot be denied on the pretext that a potential market, notably one that has been introduced through technology, [...] particularly when the exemption is based on the exercise of fundamental rights such as freedom of expression or the right of access to information.”<sup>128</sup>

Not surprisingly, the last perspective, based on the storyline of *information as a purely economic resource*, advocated for the preservation and reinforcement of IPRs. In this view, the easy distribution and reproduction possibilities offered by digital technology represented a threat to IPRs since all information, whether digital or not, was provided by someone who needed to be compensated for it:

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<sup>126</sup> UNESCO, “Info-Thoughts: A discussion paper”, High-Level Expert Group on Information Highways, 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, 7 March 1997, 4 (UA: CI/INF/201).

<sup>127</sup> Quéau, “Whose Bright Idea Is That?”, 4.

<sup>128</sup> Séverine Dusollier, Yves Poulet, and Mireille Buydens, “Copyright and Access to Information in the Digital Environment”, study prepared for INFOethics 2000, CII-2000/WS/5, Paris, 17 July 2000, 17 (UNESDOC).

“[The costs] can not be put on the shoulders of the authors and the publishing community. Since Society as a whole benefits, Society should make funds available to buy the works to make them publicly available!”<sup>129</sup>

As a consequence, this perspective rejected the idea of extending fair use or other copyright exemptions to the online space and preferred new on-demand payment systems allowing users to buy the information they need:

“Fair use, fair dealing, the library privilege, etc were originally based on the fact that information was difficult to obtain. It was necessary to find the physical copy of the book or to subscribe to an expensive international journal, which were not available everywhere. Therefore fair use is well established in the analogue world. Fair enough, but times have changed, information is a mouse click away and you can pay as you go. Why should it be free of charge?”<sup>130</sup>

This categorisation of divergent positions on the large subject of IPRs and copyright exemption is necessarily a reduction of the variety and multitude of arguments on the topic brought forward within this early episode of UNESCO’s response to the information society. Many of these arguments, however, continued to be discussed or reappeared some years later when UNESCO tried to inscribe some of the discourse lines in a legal instrument to be adopted by its General Conference.

However, at this point, it is interesting to observe that many of the positions on the value of information referred to the situation of developing countries to argue either in favour or against IPRs and an enforced public domain.<sup>131</sup> Hence, they were closely related to the third and last complex of questions that marked UNESCO’s debates and reflections in this early episode.

The following figure visualises the various storylines related to the emblematic issue of the public domain and the information commons and its three storylines:

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<sup>129</sup> Herman Spruijt, “The fair use concept in the information society”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and proceedings*, 217.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>131</sup> Arguments in favour of IPRs for the benefit of developing countries were put forward by Brian Wafawarowa, President of the South African Publishers Association. The exact opposite arguments were expressed, for example, by Carlos M. Correa, Specialist in Intellectual Property Rights at the University of Buenos Aires. Both papers in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and proceedings*.

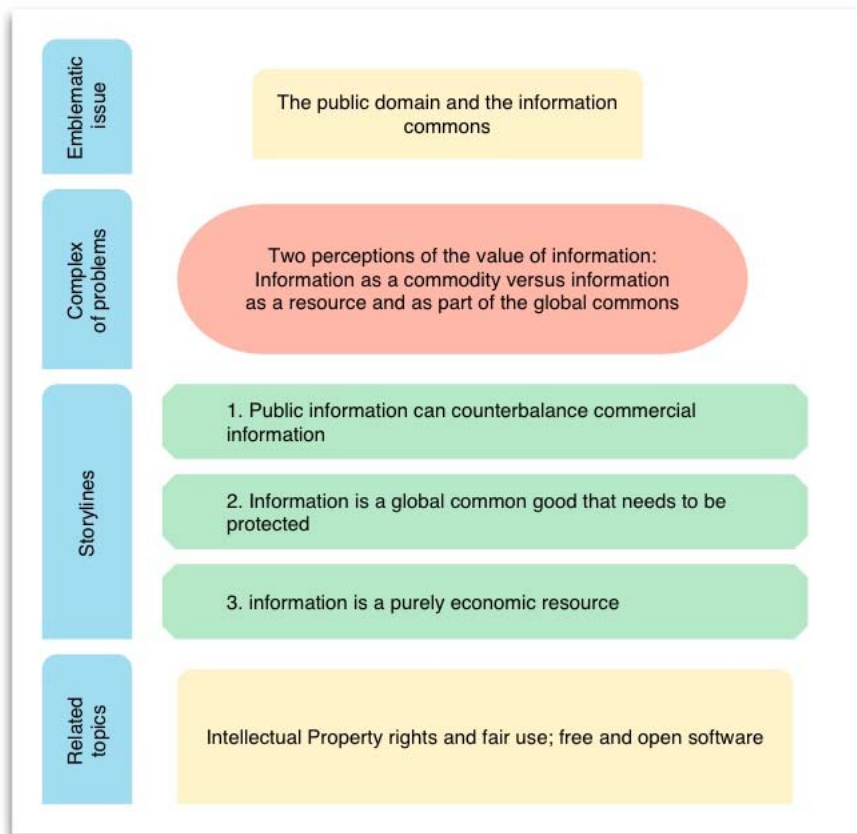


Figure 12: Emblematic issue: “The public domain and the information commons”

## The information gap

Reflecting on the value of information and its role for society and economy, it appeared obvious that an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO would focus also on the unequal distribution of information on a global scale. This was fully in accordance with its past and on-going information programmes — ranging from the early Technical Assistance projects in the 1950s and the NWICO debates to the development focus of IPDC and IIP. Furthermore, the focus on inequalities with regard to access to digital technology was in line with all international policy debates on communication and ICT in the mid-to-late 1990s, in which the “digital divide” was a central theme. Most of these debates, however, linked the problem to a purely economic and technological gap between those having access to digital technology and the Internet and those having no or limited access. By doing so, the problem’s complexity was reduced to a question of physical access to digital networks and the economic power to finance the construction of infrastructures.

To a small degree, this reductive tendency was also present in UNESCO’s debates on the topic. Yet, due to the priority given to content instead of technology, the focus within

UNESCO and the INFOethics debates was less on the differences with regard to physical access than on the differences in access to content and information. More than the “digital divide” it was, therefore, the “information gap” that attracted great attention, or —as it was usually called within UNESCO— the disparity between “information rich” and “information poor”:

“Information is increasingly considered as the main factor for innovation in all fields in all countries in the world. This is not only true for high-technology countries but also, in particular, for developing countries which struggle to overcome the gap between rich and poor. ‘Rich and poor’ is nowadays reformulated as ‘information rich and information poor’. To have or not to have access to information is the basis for all progress in science, economy, culture, and society as a whole.”<sup>132</sup>

In the same way as the digital divide stands for a much broader set of problems, the discussions on the information gap did not address this set in its full complexity but necessarily reduced it to a smaller and consequently more tangible problem. Hence, the information gap can be considered as an emblematic issue representing the large complex of socio-economic inequalities between developed and developing countries.

Since these imbalances were evident, there was little disagreement about their existence or the political, economic, cultural and societal consequences of global imbalances. Yet, it is possible to identify a number of key storylines on the information gap, each of which emphasised a different aspect of the problem. By doing so, the storylines differed in their perceptions on how the problem should be addressed and what needed to be done in order to overcome, or at least to reduce, the gap between “information rich” and “information poor”.

### *Access to information*

The first perspective seemed to view the information gap as a purely quantitative problem, which could be overcome by increasing access to information in the developing world. In many ways, it followed the logic of the debate on the digital divide which reduced socio-economic imbalances to a question of access to technology. Instead of technology, actors embracing this perspective simply shifted the focus from the physical access to digital infrastructures to the information available via these infrastructures:

“A society is information-balanced when information gaps can be overcome. [...] This is not a technological problem. It cannot be solved by providing

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<sup>132</sup> Rainer Kuhlen, “Regional Electronic Market Places – a counter model both for developed and developing countries” (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”).

everyone in the world with a computer and telecommunication equipment (although the importance of such a programme – to provide in principle everyone with the technological basis needed – should not be underestimated), but by solving the information problem.”<sup>133</sup>

In this view, the imbalances could be reduced by increasing the amount of information available in the developing countries as well as by fostering these countries’ capacities to access, process and distribute information. Therefore, it can be summarised as the storyline of *Increased access to information will bridge the differences between information rich and information poor*.

Part of the narrative was that the further distribution of information technology and the growth of the Internet would automatically lead to greater access to information and, eventually, to more equity. According to this storyline, it would therefore be sufficient to facilitate the availability of and the access to information in order to increase human well-being on a global scale:

“If knowledge creation is the key to human advancement, it follows that increasing public domain information, and facilitating universal (and equitable) access to that information, is fundamental to human well-being and to remedying the imbalances between the developing and the industrialised countries, and between disadvantaged and information rich communities.”<sup>134</sup>

It needs to be acknowledged that, in many ways, this very simplistic view on global discrepancies was not dominant within UNESCO and among participants of the INFOethics conferences. Most actors appeared to have a more developed and nuanced perspective on the problem, which either focused on the quality of the information or on the structural imbalances underlying the information gap.

### *Diversity and quality of information*

The second perspective that can be identified for the set of problems linked to the information gap was characterised by a focus on the content and the quality of information. It was based on the conviction that not only did the quantity of accessible information need to increase but that the available information should, in addition, be adapted to different needs and conditions. Consequently, a simple transfer of information

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<sup>133</sup> Kuhlen, “VF-INFOethics. Links from INFOethics ’97 to INFOethics ’98”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and proceedings*, 58.

<sup>134</sup> Longworth, “The Role of Public Authorities in Access to Information: The Broader and More Efficient Provision of Public Content”, 10.

(and technology) from industrialised to developing countries would not be sufficient for bridging the gap between “information rich” and “information poor”. Instead of a globalised information society in which all participants have access to the same content, information needed to be pertinent to local needs in order to actually be accessed and used within the developing world:

“Overcoming information inequity does not necessarily mean that global information can be accessed from everywhere by everyone (and at no cost). *The creation of content in an appropriate environment and the exchange of information among those who need it* (for instance, the south communicating with the south and not being restricted to access of information from the north, as is the case today) *is increasingly important*. What seems to be a paradox in a global information environment, namely the demand to create and use regionally pertinent information, is actually a necessity and a requirement for information use [emphasis added].”<sup>135</sup>

Hence, this perspective can be summarised by the storyline *The information gap can be reduced if the diversity and quality of the accessible information increases*. In contrast to the first perspective, according to which the Internet would trigger increased access to information, this storyline did not consider the augmentation of information diversity to be a natural result of the information society and the digital networks. Instead, in order to achieve more diverse information, developing countries needed to be enabled to create pertinent content and to exchange it among one another. Only this way could it be guaranteed that the developing world would become an equivalent member of the digital environment and the information economy:

“[A]ny campaign that seeks to develop access to information without qualifying the nature of the information and the need to make sure that the developing world is an active participant in information creation and dissemination is inadequate. [...] *The developing world does not only need access to information. It also needs relevant and appropriate information*. It also needs to be an equal participant in the global information system and to be able to do this, it needs to be both a consumer of world information and also a producer of global content. *To disregard the question what type of information, produced by who, for whose use will perpetuate the hegemony of information dissemination that exists today* [emphasis added].”<sup>136</sup>

The convictions behind this perspective appeared to share many traits with those underlying the NWICO movement in the 1970s and 80s. But while back then the term

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<sup>135</sup> Kuhlen, “VF-INFOethics. Links from INFOethics ’97 to INFOethics ’98”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics ’98. Final Report and proceedings*, 58f.

<sup>136</sup> Brian Wafawarowa, “Legal exceptions to copyright and the development of the African and development countries’ information sector”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics 2000. Final Report and proceedings*, 265ff.



“information” mostly referred to media and cultural products, it was now understood in a much broader sense and referred to all types of content available via digital and analogue technology. In addition, the most important difference was that the above-described perspective focused on information diversity entirely missed the political dimension of the claims behind the NWICO movement. Instead of relating the information gap to the global socio-economic imbalances, the perspective saw the solution for bridging the information gap as lying in the information environment itself: through the increase of information diversity and the creation of relevant content, developing countries could become equal participants in the information society, and thus catch up with societies that are more economically and socially advanced.

*Socio-economic imbalances as structural causes for the information gap*

Not all actors agreed on this perspective. Instead, it is possible to identify a third, much more pessimistic perspective that was mainly based on two related assumptions: First, it considered that the existing socio-economic gap between “information rich” and “information poor” would not shrink thanks to the Internet but would instead become even more significant. The access to information created in developed countries and distributed via the Internet on a global scale would lead to a one-way information flow and eventually result in even more dependence of the developing countries:

“[B]ecause digitalized information networks are ready to be incorporated into global information infrastructure such as Internet, the primary function they can serve is to work as the conduit for the unidirectional information dependence of developing nations on highly developed countries [...]. This hypothesis can be easily confirmed by the tendency that, due to the underdevelopment of national information service systems, Internet users in a developing country are heading for international sources of information instead of national sources.”<sup>137</sup>

From this perspective, the technological progress would not improve but deteriorate the situation of the developing world, in particular if no measures were taken to fundamentally change existing socio-economic structures. Because —and this is the second assumption of this perspective— liberalised market-forces and economic policies were viewed as working against the interests of the developing world and their hopes for a more equal information society:

“There are at present no realistic prospects that the relations between ICT-rich and ICT-poor countries will change in the near future. The key actors in

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<sup>137</sup> Sung-Gwan Park, “Disarticulations in the information society: Barriers to the universal access to information highways in the developing countries” (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”).

international ICT-policy making have expressed a clear preference for leaving the construction of the Global Information Society to ‘the forces of the free market’, and it seems that under the institutional arrangements of a corporate-capitalist market economy, the development of an equitable information society remains a very unlikely proposition. At any rate, the question of whether there can be any serious reduction of the disparity within the realities of the international economic order must be asked. [...].”<sup>138</sup>

The narrative behind this third perspective can be summarised by the storyline of *The information gap is being caused by structural inequalities that are independent from the informational environment*. With its strong critique of the existing socio-economic realities, this perspective was even closer to the ideas behind the NWICO movement than the one mentioned before. But despite acknowledging the impact of global inequalities on the field of information, it missed the political accusations that had dominated the disputes around NWICO. With its rather pessimistic position about the actual chances of changing socio-economic structures, it also significantly differed from the first and second perspective on the information gap, which saw the access and the diversity of information as a means to bridge the gap between “information rich” and “information poor” and were consequently more optimistic about the future of the global information society.

#### *Complex of problems behind the emblematic issue of the information gap*

With the divergent positions on the possibilities of bridging or narrowing the information gap, the emblematic debate on “information rich” and “information poor” stood for the exchange of ideas on a much broader complex, namely the process of globalisation, its political, economic, social and cultural consequences and its relation to expanding information and communication infrastructures. Hence, this debate touched on the heart of the challenge related to the global information society: the challenge of understanding how the multidimensional transformations, caused by the globalisation process and enhanced by the global spread of the Internet, relate to human well-being in all parts of the world. Or to formulate it differently, with a focus on UNESCO’s mandate: the challenge of fostering intellectual exchange and protecting cultural diversity in a world increasingly dominated by globally interconnected capital markets and technological networks.

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<sup>138</sup> Cees Hamelink, “Cyberspace as the public domain: The role of Civil Society”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and proceedings*, 320.

When the problem of imbalances in the global informational environment was discussed within UNESCO in the context of NWICO back in the 1970s and 1980s, neither the Internet and nor globalisation had yet become subjects of debate — for purely historical reasons. But when it became clear, in the following decades, that the structural socio-economic inequalities were not to disappear and would even deteriorate due to an increasingly globalised economy, the advent of the Internet raised hope that at least the informational imbalances might be overcome thanks to the new medium. Yet, at the same time, there was a growing awareness of the deep connection between globalisation’s economic, political and societal dimension and the technological interconnectedness<sup>139</sup> — an awareness which is not least due to influential thinkers such as the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells and his work on the Network Society which was cited several times in UNESCO’s debates on the subject. The discussion about the information gap and about the impact of the Internet on the inequality between “information rich” and “information poor” can be seen as a result of this consciousness. While some speakers of the INFOethics conferences expressed the belief that an increase in access to information, facilitated by the spread of the Internet, would allow the advantages of globalisation to be brought to the poorer part of the world, others predicted the opposite dynamic.

This opposition of hopes and opinions was also visible in debates that dealt with more specific issues related to the broader theme of “information rich” and “information poor”. These issues were, for example, the free flow of information on the Internet, the right to communicate, and the problem of linguistic diversity in cyberspace. Among them, the topic of linguistic diversity —or multilingualism as it was usually referred to in UNESCO— particularly deserves a more detailed analysis since it moved from being a marginal topic within the first episode of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society to a central theme during the last episode.

Applied to the problem of multilingualism on the Internet, the first perspective on the problem of information imbalances, expressed by the storyline *Increased access to information will bridge the differences between information rich and information poor*, results in a rather unconcerned view. It consisted in the idea that, with the growth of the Internet, English would become the universal language for the digital space, while at the same time other languages would have their space too. Different audiences required different languages

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<sup>139</sup> It would go far beyond the scope of this chapter, or this thesis, to discuss the interrelation of globalisation and the Internet. For a good introduction on the topic, see Manuel Castells, *Information Technology, Globalization and Social Development*, UNRISD Discussion Paper 114 (Geneva: UNRISD, September 1999); Gholam Khiabany, “Globalization and the Internet: Myths and Realities”, *Trends in Communication* 11, no. 2 (2003): 137-153.

and consequently —so the narrative went— there was no risk that English might become the single dominant language in cyberspace:

“We believe that in a historical perspective the idea of the domination of the world community by any one language (e.g. English) has no future. [...] We have a digital culture based in a universal language, English, as people present information in this language because either it is their mother tongue or it has been translated so it can reach the largest audience. At the same time we have multilingualism as each country presents its information in their native language. This mix of languages allows information created for a specific purpose to reach its intended audience.”<sup>140</sup>

Accordingly, once again, this perspective considered an increase in access to be a sufficient condition for the increase of linguistic diversity online.

From the second perspective identified for the information gap —consisting in the idea that *the information gap could be reduced if only the diversity and quality of the accessible information increased*— the question of multilingualism sounded slightly more challenging: Just augmenting the access to information could not solve the problem of the bulk of online information only being available in English. In order to increase multilingualism and diversity, non-English speaking users also needed to be enabled to actively take part in the online world and produce content in their local languages:

“In order to maximise the diverse content and range of cultural and linguistic perspectives which can be accessed on-line it will be important to not only maximise access to the Internet but also to encourage all participants in the on-line environment to play an interactive role and contribute to the body of data which can be accessed by others through that medium. If content is provided from a wide variety of sources then the Internet may can [*sic*] maximise its enormous potential as a source of cultural, political, ethical and linguistic diversity which can increase understanding of cross-cultural issues and perceptions.”<sup>141</sup>

But as already seen for the debate on the information gap, although this perspective recognised the problem of diversity, it did not link the problem to global socio-economic inequalities or market forces at play. Instead —once more— it saw the solution as lying in the informational environment itself and in the empowerment of its users.

In this regard, it differed from the perspective that can be related to the last of the identified storylines, namely the one that saw *the information gap as being caused by structural*

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<sup>140</sup> Soledad Ferreiro, “Dealing with diversity and digital culture” (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”).

<sup>141</sup> Karen Koomen, “The Internet and international regulatory issues” (Web archive “INFOethics 1997”).

*inequalities that are independent from the informational environment.* Applied to the question of multilingualism, this storyline viewed the dominance of English not only as a major threat for linguistic diversity, but as a danger for all kind of cultural, social and intellectual exchanges since it discriminated all other language groups:

“Some predict that, out of the 5,000 to 6,000 currently used languages, only about 100 will survive and there will be serious social, cultural and scientific consequences. There will be no real cultural and social exchanges as long as English is the only communication language on the Internet. This situation creates citizens of a ‘second zone’, disadvantaged populations.”<sup>142</sup>

But instead of improving the situation, the global expansion of the IT economy deteriorated the situation, as —according to this perspective— cultural and linguistic diversity were not part of the dominant market logic which was only profit driven:

“It is a profit-making process. And, if the creative diversity [...] is not in conformity with the aims of profit-making, the impact of new technology will be such that all the small markets with languages, customs, history, arts and literature all those strange varieties that at least for me are the fascination of the world, will be at risk.”<sup>143</sup>

Consequently, with regard to multilingualism, this perspective not only saw the imbalances caused by socio-economic structures and the negative effects of globalisation; it also considered the liberalisation of global markets as working against the interests of developing and smaller countries.

The following figure visualises the various storylines of the emblematic issue on the information gap and the corresponding storylines:

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<sup>142</sup> UNESCO, “Summary”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and proceedings*, 15

<sup>143</sup> Sveinn Einarsson, “Language and communication in the context of creative diversity”, in UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and proceedings*, 136.

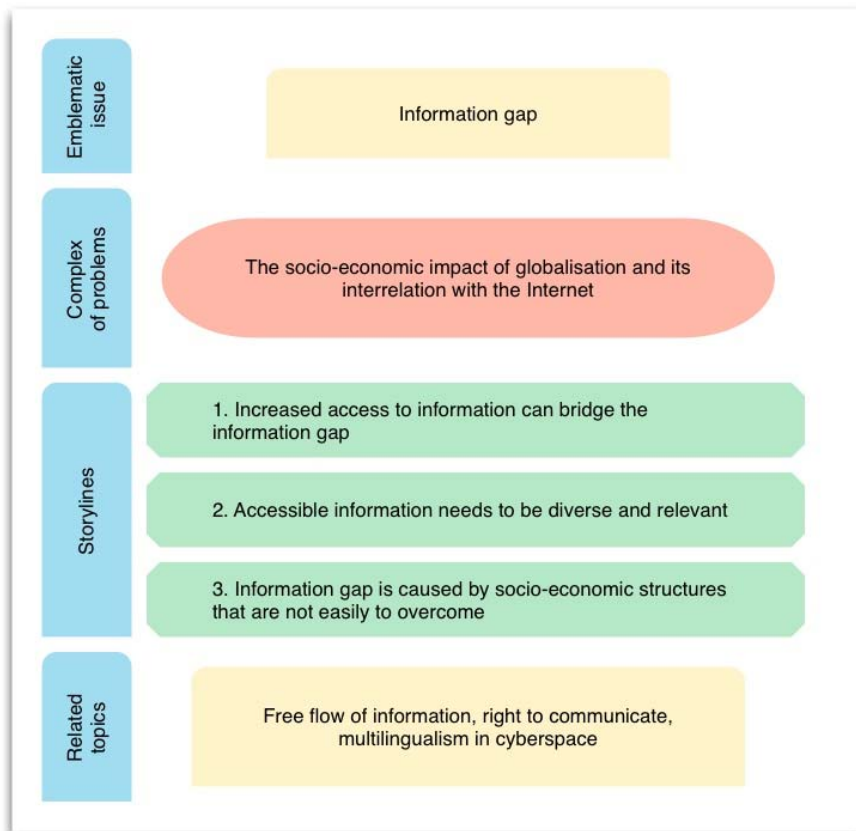


Figure 13: Emblematic issue: “The information gap”

To sum up, despite the variety of ideas and topics that had been discussed in UNESCO and during the INFOethics conference, it is possible to categorise most of them into three main sets of questions. Each set was represented by a particular emblematic issue, around which debates developed and which was often discussed in lieu of the larger complex of questions. These emblematic issues were, firstly, information ethics, secondly, the value of information and, thirdly, the inequality between “information rich and information poor”.

In addition, the various positions on these issues can be broken down into several storylines on the same issue, usually ranging from a rather positive and unconcerned to a pessimistic, alarmist or critical perspective. This also shows that, although a critical view on existing power relations and economic tendencies existed, not all voices within this period of UNESCO’s debate on the information society could be assigned to it. Often it was the more nuanced position that attracted most attention and approval.

## Chapter conclusion

The INFOethics provided the space for the new CII Sector and its partners from the professional field to develop new ideas and discourses and to foster critical discussions on challenges arising in connection with the usage and commercial exploitation of ICTs. As such, it exemplified UNESCO's search for new and convincing positions with regard to the challenges of the information society. This search started with the reflections of the Working Group on the Medium-Term Strategy in 1994, which also led to the publication of the first official statement —UNESCO and an Information Society for all— in 1996. With the appointment of Philippe Quéau as new director for CII/INF, his personal perspective on the impact of digital technologies on society took the search for ideas to a different level. Instead of looking for operational or legal solutions to the arising challenges, the CII Sector's and its experts' exchanges mainly focused on the ethical values that should oppose an information society purely driven by the interests of the market. As such, it responded in a very critical manner to the growing commercialisation of the Internet and emphasised instead the role of information as a public good.

For the research undertaken in this thesis, the analysis of this first episode of UNESCO's response to the Internet is interesting both in regard to its performative dimension and to its discursive dimension:

On the performative level, the episode was characterised by the rather unusual freedom that the UNESCO Secretariat experienced during its brainstorming about the impact of digital technology on society and about UNESCO's role in this new digital environment. Shielded by the ADG Yushkiavitshus, the CII Sector tried to catch up with the delay in its response to the new technological developments by bringing in new staff members whose positions were innovative but highly controversial. In addition, with the INFOethics conference, the CII Sector also integrated the ideas and perspectives of experts that were not necessarily part of the communities that the organisation usually drew on in the field of information and communication. Many of the experts who took part in the meetings were neither part of the professional group of archivists, librarians or technical information specialists represented in UNESCO's intergovernmental programs PGI and IIP, nor were they part of the group of journalists and media experts represented in IPDC. Instead, some of them were technical pioneers of the Internet or policy advisors involved in national Internet policy-making processes in several of UNESCO's member states. They were invited on the basis of their interesting perspective and expertise rather than because of their affiliation with a particular professional group. And despite their diverse backgrounds, many of them shared the belief that UNESCO's response to the

Internet and the information society should be guided by other than purely technological or economic principles and therefore were part of the same epistemic community as Philippe Quéau.

Besides the variety of experts and perspectives, there was another major factor that contributed to the comparatively free brainstorming during the episode analysed in this chapter: except for some exchanges during Executive Boards or meetings of the intergovernmental councils of PGI and IIP, there was very little control through member states over the ideas developed during this period. Instead, the debates on information ethics, which took place within the context of expert conferences that official member states' representatives could only attend as observers, allowed for an open exchange that was not limited by political considerations.

This had very strong repercussions on the discursive level since the lack of political interference made it possible to develop, test and adapt new ideas and arguments that, in more official settings, might have been disapproved at an early stage. This aspect is particularly interesting as it was during this phase that the CII Sector aimed, for the first time, to develop a coherent position on the information society that would not only take into account the opportunities but also the challenges and threats of the new digital environment. As a consequence, most of the emblematic issues and storylines that characterised UNESCO's general policy discourse for the following decade —and partly until today— emerged out of these stimulating reflections on moral values and information ethics.

Looking at the broader historical context, it is interesting to observe that, although some discussions during the INFOethics conferences centred on the situation of developing countries, the topic of development and the role of ICTs for development was not an issue of high priority during this early episode. This represents a discontinuity compared to UNESCO's previous activities in the field of information, which had introduced a focus on development as a key principle during the late 1980s. And as a matter of fact, while in 1996 several of UNESCO's member states still proposed that UNESCO should organise a World Conference on Information and Communication for Development<sup>144</sup> in order to facilitate the international debate about the Internet, the idea was dropped in the following years.<sup>145</sup> Instead, it was decided that UNESCO should continue its conference

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<sup>144</sup> UNESCO, "The Challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO", 150 EX/15, 16 August 1996 (UNESDOC); UNESCO, "Summary records", 150 EX/SR.1-17 (11), 30 January 1997 (UNESDOC).

<sup>145</sup> The decision to drop the idea of a World Conference in favour of the INFOethics series was announced during the Executive Board meeting in April 1997 as part of a larger strategy to meet the



series on information ethics and make it an annual event. Yet, it can be assumed that there were other, more political reasons behind this decision.<sup>146</sup> In view of the direction taken by UNESCO's debates on the Internet, might it have been the fear that the organisation could once again get caught up in a conflict between developing and developed countries, and this only 15 years after the NWICO crisis?

Ironically, the INFOethics conference series was ended in 2000 in order to allow UNESCO to focus on the preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society, which —once again— was conceived as a development conference. Yet, this time, the organiser was not UNESCO but ITU, which reduced the risk that the meeting could turn into a new NWICO. Besides WSIS, there were a number of other, more unofficial reasons for the end of the INFOethics conference series:

First of all, on a purely administrative level, the workload involved in organising a large annual congress with several hundred participants grew too large for the small team of only two or three persons in charge of the INFOethics programme.<sup>147</sup> From 1999 onwards, the same team was, in addition, occupied with drafting and negotiating a recommendation text on the same topic — a process which turned out to be much more laborious than initially expected.

Furthermore, on an institutional level, there were important changes around the year 2000, starting with the election of Koïchiro Matsuura who replaced Federico Mayor as Director-General in 1999. While Mayor had backed the INFOethics conferences, it can be assumed that the new management might have had a less favourable view on some of the provocative perspective that emerged from the meetings' debates.

And lastly, the year 2000 marked a change in UNESCO's response to the information society as it was in the first year of the new millennium that the organisation launched its new intergovernmental programme which represented its official institutional response to the information society.

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challenges of the Information Highways (UNESCO, "The Implementation of 150 EX/Decision 3.5.1 concerning the challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO", 151 EX/16, 21 April 1997 [UNESDOC]). However, in later years, it is possible to find other references to this idea in documents of UNESCO's governing bodies, indicating that not all member states had already renounced to this plan.

<sup>146</sup> See also Siochrú, "Will the Real WSIS Please Stand Up?".

<sup>147</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview.

## 2. Information for all: UNESCO's search for an institutional frame for its response to the information society

*“Gérer le présent et préparer le futur. Ceci ne devra pas être sous-estimé.”*<sup>148</sup>

Following the development of UNESCO's response regarding the information society, this second empirical chapter retraces the second episode determined by the *search for an institutional frame for its response to the information society*. It therefore describes the policy process that started in 1996 and ended in the creation of new intergovernmental programme in 2001, the Information For All Programme (IFAP).

In 1997, acknowledging the increasing convergence of communication and information technologies and their usage, UNESCO decided to replace its long-established programmes dealing with information and informatics —the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP)— with a new structure that would be more adapted to responding to the challenges of the information society. This was seen as a logical step in the efforts of rendering UNESCO's activities related to digital technology more coherent:

“Depuis quelques années déjà un nouveau programme se dessine à partir de la manière dont le Secrétariat tend à structurer ses activités. Il convient néanmoins d’y ajouter plus de cohérence autour d’axes forts qui soient acceptés par tous et de rattacher certaines des activités qui ne sont pas toujours très bien comprises à ces axes. L’une des raisons de cette difficulté réside dans le fait que le Secrétariat travaille déjà dans une optique nouvelle, même si elle reste à parfaire, et que les programmes officiels gérés par les deux groupes ne sont plus en phase. C’est la tâche qui nous attend.”<sup>149</sup>

In order to do so, a compromise had to be found between the wish to create an innovative and coherent new programme and the bond to preserve the legacy of the two existing ones. This was additionally complicated by PGI and IIP having distinct identities and their intergovernmental structures assuming different functions: while PGI's intergovernmental council, established in 1977, mainly fulfilled a conceptual role and was responsible for planning PGI's guidance in the field of archives, libraries and specialist information services, the IIP intergovernmental committee, set up in 1985, was in charge

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<sup>148</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, “Quelques réflexions pour la préparation d’un nouveau programme intégrant les Programmes d’Information et d’Informatique”, comment submitted for the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 20 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

of developing practical activities in the field of informatics and of seeking the necessary resources for the implementation of projects in developing countries. The drafting of the new programme was mainly carried out by the national experts who represented UNESCO's member states within the intergovernmental bodies of the two programmes, and who therefore constitute the key actors of this episode.

The chapter starts with an introduction to the background of UNESCO's decision to merge its activities in the field of information and informatics in order to create an intergovernmental programme on the information society. Therefore, it briefly discusses the *general context of the phenomenon of 'convergence'* and its relevance for UNESCO's policy debates. It then moves on to analysing, first, the organisation's intellectual response to the convergence of information, communication and informatics through the publication of several world reports and, secondly, its institutional response consisting in the creation of a common division of information and informatics. The second part of the chapter moves on to the *description of the performative dimension* of this episode. It retraces the policy-making process leading to IFAP's creation in detail and analyses the different groups of actors involved in the drafting of its definitive documents as well as the various ways in which they tried to secure their influence thanks to the new programme's institutional structure, its objectives and activities. The last part of the chapter finally focuses on the *scrutiny of the discursive dimension* of this episode by providing an in-depth analysis of the main issues discussed and the key arguments brought forward during the exchanges leading to IFAP's creation. It summarises the debates by categorising them into three major dichotomies that determined both the discursive contributions during the drafting process and the concrete formulation of the new programme's definitive documents. It also retraces the origins of these discursive contributions, of which many were either a legacy of the previous programmes or derived from the discussions of the INFOethics conferences.

The overarching goal of the chapter is to retrace *how* UNESCO, within the general context of technological convergence, developed an institutional response to the challenges of the information society and inscribed selected discursive elements into the new programme's mandate, objectives and activities, thereby contributing to the institutionalisation of the organisation's general policy discourse.

## 2.1 Understanding the context: The convergence of information and informatics

In order to understand the dynamics leading to the establishment of an intergovernmental programme that addresses the challenges of the information society, it is necessary to look at the larger historical and institutional context in which UNESCO undertook this effort. Therefore, this first sub-chapter takes a closer look at the phenomenon of “convergence” between information, communication and informatics, which represented a major political concern not only for UNESCO but for many different actors involved in communication and information policy-making during the 1990s. For a better understanding of UNESCO’s response to the phenomenon of convergence, the sub-chapter first introduces the general political discussion on convergence and its relevance for UNESCO, and moves on to discuss the organisation’s intellectual response to convergence —consisting in the publication of a number of world reports— and its institutional response, namely the creation of a common division of information and informatics. The inception of the latter marked the beginning of UNESCO’s work on the new intergovernmental programme and, hence, also represents the starting point of the more in-depth analysis of the performative and discursive dimension of the episode under scrutiny in this chapter. While the first part draws both on secondary literature and archive research to discuss the general thematic context, the second and third sub-chapters contribute more fundamentally to the empirical and historical research about UNESCO as they are exclusively based on interviews and on document and archive analysis.

### General context: The policy debate on ‘convergence’

During the 1990s, the mutual influence of communication, information and informatics was reflected, within UNESCO, by the creation of a common *Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics*. But it was not just UNESCO’s attention that centred on this convergence. In fact, the growing pervasiveness of digital technology resulting in the merging of several aspects of the formerly separate fields of information and communication was a major political concern for many policy-makers during this period, particularly in highly developed countries.<sup>150</sup> As a consequence, the term “convergence”

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<sup>150</sup> The political response to convergence was reflected by a number of policy documents adopted during this decade, such as: US Congress, *Critical Connections: Communication for the Future*, Office of Technological Assessment (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing, 1990); OECD, *Convergence between Communications Technologies: Case Studies from North America and Western Europe*, Committee on Information,

developed into a buzzword in the field of policy and in the academic and professional communities. As such, it was mostly used to describe all the different but intrinsically interrelated processes of change triggered by the arrival of digital technology and the Internet as one single phenomenon. Yet, despite the popularity of the term, a lack of theoretical reflection on the concept appeared to be a general feature of most discourses about convergence: many policy-makers and practitioners as well as much of the academic literature employed the term without providing any concrete definition of its meaning.<sup>151</sup> Offering an introduction to the various ways of framing convergence and defining it goes far beyond the aim of this contextual overview. But in order to provide some general context for its relevance to UNESCO's reflection on the information society, it is necessary to understand that the phenomenon of convergence was intrinsically linked to questions of regulation and to the possibilities of influencing and steering certain dynamics in the fields of communication and information.

Indeed, the debate about convergence in the field of communication and information generally distinguishes at least four different dimensions, all caused by digitalisation and the increasing pervasiveness of digital computing:

- (1) convergence of technologies, networks and infrastructures;
- (2) convergence of markets and industries;
- (3) convergence of services and content; and
- (4) convergence of usages.<sup>152</sup>

While the first two dimensions are of a technical and economic nature and consequently outside of the scope of UNESCO's intellectual and cultural mandate, the last two relate to topics that have always been at the centre of UNESCO's attention and its programmes

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Communications and Computer Policy (Paris: OECD, 1996); European Commission, *Green Paper on the Convergence of the Telecommunications, Media and Information Technology Sectors, and the Implications for Regulation: Towards an Information Society Approach* (Brussels: European Commission, 1997).

<sup>151</sup> Jan Herzhoff, "The ICT Convergence Discourse in the Information Systems Literature – A Second-Order Observation", 2009, <http://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1182&context=ecis2009> (last accessed 11 November 2014). Despite the fact that various disciplines have been studying the phenomenon of convergence since the 1970s, the media scholar Appelgren remarked that there is no generally accepted definition of it (Ester Appelgren, "Convergence and Divergence in Media: Different Perspectives", paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> ICCC/IFIP International Conference on Electronic Publishing, Brasília, 2004). For the attempt of defining the use of the term "convergence" in Communication Studies, see Gerhard Vowe and Philipp Henn, "'Konvergenz' — Klärung eines kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Schlüsselbegriffs," in *Kommunikationspolitik für die digitale Gesellschaft*, ed. Martin Emmer and Christian Strippel, *Digital Communication Research* (Berlin: DGPuk, 2015), 43-60.

<sup>152</sup> For an overview of the history of the concept and various attempts of definition, see Jonas Lind, "Convergence: History of Term Usage and Lessons for Firm Strategists", paper presented at the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial ITS Conference, Berlin, 2004.

regarding communication and information, namely content and usage. In addition, the convergence of formerly separate fields brought about another challenge that has, since the organisation's inception, been at the heart of UNESCO's activities: the question of how to regulate the dynamics of such multidimensional policy fields as communication, information and, even more, digital technology. Due to the technological and economic convergence of telecommunication with other media and information services, the formerly separate spheres of telecommunication regulation and regulation of mass media also became increasingly connected. These regulatory convergence processes, coupled with the processes of globalisation, are often described as some of the most important aspects that contributed to the strong neo-liberal and market-oriented communication policies that have been dominating the global information and media landscape since the 1990s.<sup>153</sup> As a consequence, convergence cannot simply be seen as a phenomenon that derived from, and at the same time triggered, changes on the technological and economic level; it must, just as much, be considered a problem of policy and regulation.<sup>154</sup>

For an organisation like UNESCO, the reflection on the phenomenon of convergence was consequently two-sided: On the one hand, it tried to understand the impact of digital technology on society and culture, in particular the changing nature of media and information content and the ways people use and process this content. On the other hand, UNESCO considered the question of how an intergovernmental organisation of its size and scope could influence or, at least, respond to the pervasive impact of digital technology on its fields of mission. After all, UNESCO's interest in convergence was not an interest in the technological phenomenon itself but rather in its effects on the organisation's mandate, which might not lie in the technical sphere and yet was in many ways strongly impacted by technological developments.

Considering its multiple consequences, UNESCO seemed to recognise that the different dimensions of convergence not only had strong repercussions for the organisation's own activities but also for the work of the professional communities and policy-makers who collaborated with the organisation, in particular in the framework of the three concerned intergovernmental programmes, IPDC, PGI and IIP.<sup>155</sup> For this reason, the CII Sector tried to bring the relevant dimensions of convergence to the attention of these actors by dealing with them in a number of reports that were released during the 1990s under the

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<sup>153</sup> Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, "Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy Paradigm", *European Journal of Communication* 18, no. 2 (2003): 181-207.

<sup>154</sup> Also the subject of "policy convergence" has been discussed in a large amount of scholarly literature (Ibid.).

<sup>155</sup> Courrier, Personal interview.

aspiring name “World Reports on Communication and Information”. These world reports, that treated the various aspects of the changing nature of communication and information and their role for society and culture in great detail, can be seen as UNESCO’s most developed intellectual response to the phenomenon of convergence. And although their preparation took place separately from the formulation of an official policy response to the challenges of the information society, they represent an important contribution of UNESCO’s reflection on the topic. They add to the understanding of the organisation’s policy discourse and are therefore discussed in the next sub-chapter.

### **“Thinking convergence”: UNESCO’s World Reports on information and communication**

Although the denomination of “world reports” might seem very ambitious, it is necessary to mention that UNESCO is not the only international organisation that regularly issues world reports. On the contrary, the publication of these reports is a tool used by all major UN agencies in order to give a regular update of the global problems related to their mandate.<sup>156</sup> These reports are generally part of the different organisations’ overall communication strategy and aim at fostering a policy debate or at bringing a certain issue to the public attention. During the 1990s, there was a significant increase in the number of world reports published by UN institutions: UNESCO alone contributed fifteen world reports between 1989 and the end of the millennium.<sup>157</sup> Just for the fields of information and communication, which had not been covered in any report before the year 1989, four reports were published during this period: two World Communication Reports (in 1989 and 1997), one World Information Report (also in 1997), and finally, in 1999, a joint World Communication and Information Report.

The development of these reports is rather interesting, as it shows the development of UNESCO’s priorities in the respective fields in an emblematic manner:

The first report was planned and developed in the context of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and was released in 1989, the year the organisation adopted its New Communication Strategy and eventually tried to leave behind the concept of NWICO and the related political

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<sup>156</sup> Well-known examples are the World Health Report and the World Development Report, which are published on a nearly annual basis by WHO and UNDP respectively.

<sup>157</sup> For an overview of these reports, see Hübner and Reuther, *UNESCO-Handbuch*, 27. For more background about UN World Reports, see also: UNESCO, “Evaluation of UNESCO’s policy regarding World Reports”, 160 EX/45, 24 August 2000, 9ff.

confrontations. But as the report was conceptualised before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist states within Europe, the media and communication landscape it described was still strongly characterised by ideological rivalries. The report tried to get around the rivalries by focusing on uncontroversial topics like the practical role of communication in developing countries and technological progress, which already showed the first signs of convergence.<sup>158</sup>

Following the profound changes that had occurred during the early 1990s, both on the political and on the technological level, in 1993, UNESCO decided to update the world report with statistical data and studies on new trends in ICTs and their impact on the work of media professionals and society.<sup>159</sup> Accordingly, the updated World Communication Report, published in 1997, was much less focused on questions of development than its predecessor. This confirms the observation that, during the 1990s, UNESCO increasingly shifted away from the development priority which had been introduced in all communication and information programmes some years earlier. Instead, the updated World Communication Report provided important elements of reflection about the impact of digitalisation on traditional media fields, such as the written press, television and broadcasting.<sup>160</sup> In addition, it explicitly broached the issue of convergence, which it described as a new paradigm leading to transformations of the media landscape on the technical, structural, corporate and legislative level. Consequently, it also introduced the complex regulatory problems brought about by the different dimensions of convergence, like copyright, content regulation and others.

Quite astonishingly, the very same year, the CII Sector also published another world report, which dealt with similar questions but from a different point of view. While the communication report focused on media, this first World Information Report reflected on the convergence of informatics with the traditional fields of information, such as archives, libraries and specialist information services.<sup>161</sup> For this purpose, it provided systematic and statistical information and underlined major societal, content-related and regulatory issues posed by the new technologies. In this context, it also contributed to the on-going reflections on the information society, which was defined in the report mainly in

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<sup>158</sup> UNESCO, *World Communication Report* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1989).

<sup>159</sup> UNESCO, "Approved Programme and budget for 1994-1995", 27 C/5 Approved, January 1994, 111 (UNESDOC).

<sup>160</sup> UNESCO, *World Communication Report: The Media and the Challenge of the New Technologies* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1997).

<sup>161</sup> Yves Courrier and Andrew Large, eds., *World Information Report 1997/98* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1997).



economic terms, namely as a society in which “information is used as an economic resource [...], people use information more intensively in their activities as consumers [...]” and which is characterised by the “development of an information sector within the economy”.<sup>162</sup>

With this framing, the World Information Report continued the strand of discourse which had been characteristic for the intellectual work of the General Information Programme (PGI). Yet, it differed from the dominant discourse developed during the same period within the INFOethics conferences in many ways, as the latter deliberately distanced themselves from this economic viewpoint. This difference is important as it allows for a better understanding of why the economic dimension of the information society was not more explicitly addressed in the new intergovernmental programme that UNESCO created in response to the phenomenon of convergence.

On a different but related note, the preparation of the World Information Report also led to conflicts between its editors and certain members of the PGI Intergovernmental Council, who —despite having proposed the publication of such a report— were not satisfied with its editorial concept. Whereas the World Communication Report was authored by a single person —the Algerian political scientist Lotfi Maherzi— and edited by Alain Modoux, UNESCO’s director in charge of media and communication, the preparation of the World Information Report involved thirty-two authors, scattered over seventeen countries and five continents, and two editors (UNESCO’s staff member Yves Courier and the Canadian information scientist Andrew Large). Several members of PGI criticised the selection of authors and themes proposed by these editors, saying that they would not be representative and that they focus too strongly on new information technologies — a criticism that illustrates the contentious nature of both the subject of convergence and the atmosphere within the newly founded sectors where, due to the impact of ICTs on traditional fields of information, all involved professional communities felt the need to defend their fields of competence.<sup>163</sup>

In addition, the parallel publication of two world reports —one of them reflecting the impact of convergence on traditional media and communication fields and the other focusing on traditional information fields— showed once more that communication and information were still considered two separate realms within UNESCO. And this despite the fact that they had been brought together in a joint sector some years earlier and both

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<sup>162</sup> Nick Moore, “The Information Society”, in *World Information Report 1997/98*, ed. Yves Courier and Andrew Large (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1997), 271f.

<sup>163</sup> UNESCO, “Final Report”, PGI Council, 11<sup>th</sup> session, PGI.96/COUNCIL.XI/7, December 1996 (UNESDOC). See also the review of the report as well as the editor’s response to it, both published in *Bulletin des Bibliothèques de France* 6 (1997) and 2 (1998).

had to deal with the same challenges in recognising the increasingly pervasive role of information technologies.

Only two years later, in 1999, another world report was published, this time merging all three fields under the CII Sector's responsibility. This World Communication and Information Report focused on providing detailed information about the technological development of the Internet and its interrelation with social processes.<sup>164</sup> Based on a large amount of statistical data, it analysed the *status quo* of the information society and the development of ICTs throughout the world, thereby trying to achieve a better understanding of its effects in UNESCO's fields of competence.<sup>165</sup>

Officially, the decision to produce only one joint report instead of two separate ones was motivated by the growing awareness of the convergence of CII's thematic fields:

“The World Report on Information and Communication, which we plan to publish in 1999, is a good illustration of our response to the phenomenon of convergence.”<sup>166</sup>

At the same time, the decision was certainly also motivated by budgetary constraints.<sup>167</sup> Furthermore, towards the end of the millennium, UNESCO's member states increasingly criticised the organisation for publishing too many reports. Besides the important costs involved in the preparation of each report, they considered that the inflation of world reports would necessarily lead to a proliferation of attention. Despite the high professional quality of the reports, this would reduce the added value of each of them.<sup>168</sup> In response to this, UNESCO decided in 2001 to issue a single UNESCO World Report every two years on a specific issue of importance to the organisation as a whole.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Mohsen Tawfik, Yves Courier, and Gaynor Bartagnon, eds., *World Communication and Information Report 1999-2000* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1999).

<sup>165</sup> Rainer Kuhlen, “Der erste Weltbericht über Kommunikation und Information”, *UNESCO Heute* 4 (2000): 29-31.

<sup>166</sup> “Opening remarks by Henrikas Yushkiavitchus”, in UNESCO, “Final report”, PGI Bureau, 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, PGI-98/COUNCIL/BUR.XXV/3, June 1998, Annex I (UNESDOC).

<sup>167</sup> Courier, Personal interview.

<sup>168</sup> UNESCO, “Evaluation of UNESCO's policy regarding world reports”, 160 EX/45, 24 August 2000 (UNESDOC); UNESCO, “Evaluation of UNESCO's policy regarding world reports”, 161 EX/45, 24 April 2001 (UNESDOC).

<sup>169</sup> An interesting side remark for our subject is that the first of these common intersectorial world reports was published in 2005 on the subject of “Knowledge Societies” and represented the direct continuation of UNESCO's reflections on the information society (UNESCO, *Towards Knowledge Societies* [Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2005]).

To sum up, the World Reports on Communication and Information, which UNESCO published over the course of the 1990s, represented an important element of reflection on the various aspects related to the converging fields under the new CII Sector's responsibility. But the reports had very little influence on UNESCO's policy debates on the subject, despite the efforts that went into their preparation. Indeed, while they thoroughly discussed the various dimensions of convergence and their consequences for UNESCO's policy-making efforts, these reflections remained on a purely theoretical level and were not transposed to a more practical level. The actual implementation of ideas of "convergence" on an institutional and political level proved to be much more difficult and this not least due to the resistance of the professional communities involved in the respective fields.

### **"Doing convergence": A common structure for information and informatics**

Initially, it seemed that UNESCO was responding to the increasing convergence of communication, information and the respective technologies in a rather decisive manner. Already in 1989, a resolution at the 25<sup>th</sup> General Conference requested that council members of UNESCO's three intergovernmental programmes in the fields of communication, information and informatics (IPDC, PGI and IIP) should be "making recommendations to the Director-General for better co-ordination".<sup>170</sup> Following up on this demand, the chairpersons of the three programmes came together in two meetings in November 1991 and 1992 and discussed ways to improve their cooperation. One of the measures considered was the creation of a common secretariat for IIP and PGI, which would allow for better harmonisation and would, at the same time, constitute a first institutional response to the "significance and practical repercussions of processes of technological convergence".<sup>171</sup> However, despite this early initiative, it took the organisation four more years until it finally decided to merge the different programmes on an operational level. In addition, this merge only concerned two of the three fields, namely information and informatics, while a parallel structure continued to exist for the field of communication.

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<sup>170</sup> UNESCO, "Amendment to Article 4.1 of the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Council for the PGI", 25 C/Resolutions, Resolution 15.111 adopted on 8 November 1989 (UNESDOC).

<sup>171</sup> UNESCO, "Final report", PGI Council, 10<sup>th</sup> session, PGI.94/COUNCIL.X/4, 15 December 1994, 7ff.

The institutionalisation of convergence started in 1996 with the creation of a new division in charge of information and informatics and of the two related intergovernmental programmes PGI and IIP, whose secretariats had previously been provided by separate divisions.<sup>172</sup> This new Information and Informatics Division (CII/INF) was directed by Philippe Quéau who had been recruited for this position by ADG Yushkiavitshus himself.<sup>173</sup> In his former position as the director of research at the French *Institut National de l'audiovisuel* (INA), Quéau had been in charge of developing one of the first French web servers that offered multimedia content and had, in many ways, contributed to making the Internet better known in France. Combining the technological understanding of the new medium with his humanistic and philosophical reflection about a non-commercial cyberspace, his task at UNESCO was to politically and operationally introduce the idea of convergence and the Internet in the organisation's programmes.<sup>174</sup>

Initially, the combination of the secretariats for PGI and IIP under Quéau's responsibility did not foresee a merge of the two programmes themselves, which—as the ADG still emphasised in 1996—were supposed to “remain distinct entities preserving their specificity”.<sup>175</sup> Instead, the same year, PGI underwent a major effort to develop a renewed mandate that would adapt the programme to the new needs caused by the growing importance of digital technology for all information-related fields. With this move, PGI's intergovernmental council also tried to respond to growing complaints from various sides that UNESCO's governing bodies were “receiving advice on new information issues from everywhere except PGI”.<sup>176</sup>

The updated and enlarged PGI mandate bore the telling name “Entering the Cyber Era”. With its conceptual basis proposed by Quéau<sup>177</sup>, it also introduced the new director's very personal concerns to PGI, namely the public domain, the “copy left” and “fair use”

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<sup>172</sup> Recall that UNESCO's programmes are coordinated by the UNESCO Secretariat within five programme sectors (currently: Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, Communication and Information). Each sector is further divided into thematic divisions, with each division being composed of several sections.

<sup>173</sup> Georges Dupont, Personal interview, 18 November 2013; Quéau, Personal interview.

<sup>174</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview; Quéau, Personal interview.

<sup>175</sup> UNESCO, “Final Report”, PGI Bureau, 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting, PGI-96/COUNCIL/BUR.XXIW7, June 1996 (UNESDOC).

<sup>176</sup> “Opening remarks by Henrikas Yushkiavitshus”, in UNESCO, “Final report”, PGI Bureau, 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, PGI-98/COUNCIL/BUR.XXV/3, June 1998, Annex I, 9 (UNESDOC). In the same speech, the then ADG remarked that “IIP did not have to weather these kind of storms”, but was instead “sinking quietly in calm waters” due to its difficulties in raising sufficient extra-budgetary funds.

<sup>177</sup> UNESCO, “Final Report”, PGI Bureau, 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting, PGI-96/COUNCIL/BUR.XXIW7, June 1996 (UNESDOC).

principles and the role of information as a “global common good” — concepts that were later also discussed during the creation of the new programme. Yet, the introduction of this new set of ideas did not imply that PGI had decided to abandon its previous activities regarding archives, libraries and national information policies. Instead, they were seen as ideal tools for promoting access to information and, this way, bridging the growing information gap between developed and developing countries by offering both traditional and digital services.<sup>178</sup>

Despite PGI’s efforts to “modernise” its mandate, an even closer cooperation between the two intergovernmental programmes PGI and IIP still seemed inexorable. In late 1997, UNESCO’s General Conference decided that all statutory meetings of PGI’s and IIP’s intergovernmental bodies should in the future be convened as joint meetings in order to reduce costs and to establish the synergies necessary for a possible merger of the two programmes.<sup>179</sup>

These intergovernmental bodies consisted in:

- (1) An intergovernmental council for PGI and an intergovernmental committee for IIP, composed of delegates from 36 member states, elected at each session of UNESCO’s General Conference. The members of the council/committee met every two years in order to take all general decisions concerning the respective programme, with an important difference regarding the concrete functions of the two bodies: while PGI’s intergovernmental council had a more abstract advisory role in guiding and planning the conceptual strategies of the programme, the intergovernmental committee of IIP was in charge of more concrete decisions that consisted in overseeing the programme, developing concrete projects and seeking extra-budgetary resources for their implementation.
  
- (2) A bureau for each programme, elected by the council/committee members during their meetings; the bureaus were much smaller than the council and committee as they only included representatives of each regional group<sup>180</sup>, the president of the

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<sup>178</sup> UNESCO, “Entering the Cyber Era: Proposals for a new mandate of PGI”, PGI Council, 11<sup>th</sup> session, PGI-96/COUNCIL.XI/6, 25 October 1996 (UNESDOC).

<sup>179</sup> UNESCO, “Major Programme IV: Communication, information and informatics”, 29 C/Resolutions, Resolution 28 adopted on 12 November 1997, § 2.C(f) (UNESDOC).

<sup>180</sup> UNESCO’s member states are organised into five regional groups: Africa; Arab States; Asia and the Pacific; Europe and North America; and Latin America and the Caribbean.

programme and a rapporteur; their meetings took place at least once a year in order to discuss all operational questions.<sup>181</sup>

For both programmes, the representatives of the member states were usually recognised experts in their respective fields of competence, who were delegated by their government to represent both their national interests and the interests of their professional communities. In addition, the meetings of the intergovernmental bodies were attended by a small number of observers representing all the concerned professional associations that had long-standing working relationships with UNESCO, which often dated back to the time of these associations' foundation. For the field of archives and libraries, these associations were the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Federation for Documentation (FID). For the field of scientific and technical information, UNESCO additionally collaborated closely with the International Council for Science (ICSU). After the reorganisation of UNESCO's official relations with NGOs in 1995, these professional associations had been granted the highest category of "formal associate relations", which allowed them not only to comment, but also to officially advise the organisation on all matters concerning their fields of expertise.<sup>182</sup> Later, during the preparation of the new programme, this group was also joined by the Internet Society (ISOC).<sup>183</sup>

During their joint meetings in June and December 1998, the members of PGI's and IIP's intergovernmental bodies showed they were conscious of the convergence of ICTs resulting in an increased overlap of the two programmes which rendered a better integration of their key objectives inevitable.<sup>184</sup> In addition, they were aware that the future influence of their professional groups within UNESCO depended on their ability to adapt to the digital environment:

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<sup>181</sup> In addition to these intergovernmental bodies, each programme was supported by a small secretariat, provided by the UNESCO Secretariat, that followed up on the various projects and carried out the daily work related to the coordination of the intergovernmental programmes.

<sup>182</sup> The reorganisation of UNESCO's official relations with NGOs is described in more detail in chapter 3, Part I (see here page 47ff). A list of NGOs and their official status at UNESCO after the reorganisation of 1995 is included in UNESCO, "Non-governmental organizations maintaining official relations with UNESCO", BRX-99/WS/11, October 1999 (UNESDOC).

<sup>183</sup> The historical background of the first four institutions and their relation with UNESCO are discussed in the historical chapter 2 of Part I (see here page 76ff). The operational relations between UNESCO and the Internet Society (ISOC) were only established towards the end of the millennium. Founded in 1992 by Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn, two of the "fathers of the Internet", ISOC's mission is to promote the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet.

<sup>184</sup> See in particular the comment by Marta Stone, who attended the 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee as an observer from the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID), handwritten minutes (UA: CI/INF/195).

“Le premier avantage que l’on pourrait en tirer [de la création d’un nouveau programme] serait de montrer aux autorités que les mondes de l’information et de l’informatique sont capables d’évoluer en même temps que les technologies qu’ils utilisent ou représentent. Il y va de la crédibilité des professions que nous représentons. Depuis quelques années les instances de l’Unesco discutent de la Société de l’information, en nous donnant l’impression, probablement à raison que les programmes actuels sont dépassés, et peut être les acteurs aussi. Nous avons une occasion exceptionnelle d’exposer nos idées et nos projets avec de plus l’encouragement du Directeur Général.”<sup>185</sup>

However, a simple fusion of the two existing programmes was regarded as inadequate due to their different identities, which —according to the PGI and IIP experts— could not simply be combined in a joint structure without one of them being lost: while PGI was concerned with the content of information and information technology, IIP was considered to regard informatics as a tool and, hence, to be concerned with the medium carrying the content.<sup>186</sup>

For this reason, after an extensive debate, the members of PGI’s and IIP’s intergovernmental bodies eventually proposed the dissolution of the existing programmes and the creation of a new one. Led by a new intergovernmental body, the new programme was to assure a more coherent approach to the challenges the two old structures were confronted with and, hence, was seen as the missing element in UNESCO’s response to the information society:

“UNESCO’s position in the information society has been outlined over the past years in various documents [...]. Numerous activities of the Organization have been carried out in UNESCO’s Programme Sectors with a view to defining UNESCO’s place in the information society. Many activities of the Organization have taken advantage of the new technologies. However, the establishment of a coherent, sufficiently funded programme fully adapted to the realities of the information society which would accord with the overall mandate of the Organization, is still a desideratum.”<sup>187</sup>

In addition, the IIP and PGI members considered that a new programme could be instrumental in fostering the awareness of UNESCO’s member states of the importance of information and informatics; this could eventually result in increased funding and, thus,

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<sup>185</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted for the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 20 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>186</sup> The handwritten minutes of all joint meetings of PGI and IIP, reflecting the discussions and arguments of their bureaus, council and committee members, are available in the UNESCO Archives (UA: CI/INF/195). The theoretical and conceptual considerations behind the, indeed, very distinct mandates of the two programmes are discussed in the historical chapter 2 of Part I (see here page 76ff).

<sup>187</sup> UNESCO, “Agenda for the joint session of PGI and IIP”, June 1998, 19 (UA: CI/INF/192).

solve one of the main problems that both existing programmes regularly had to face, namely the lack of sufficient budgetary means.

Yet, since the creation of a new programme entailed the dissolution of the two existing ones, the decision was not easy to take and remained very contentious until the very last moment. This was mainly caused by the resistance of the professional communities represented in PGI's and IIP's intergovernmental bodies, which, in addition, held formal associate relations with UNESCO and were therefore able to influence the organisation's policy-making in their respective fields.<sup>188</sup> In particular, the specialists of librarianship, archives and information services, who had a longstanding relationship with UNESCO's PGI programme, feared that the dissolution or merger of "their" programme would cause them to lose UNESCO as their key policy forum for discussion and influence. These practitioners realised that the new digital possibilities not only offered enormous possibilities for the traditional fields of information services; they also perceived them as a threat since the new priority given to digital information and Internet services could easily replace the attention that UNESCO traditionally paid to information services provided by libraries and archives.

But despite these fears, the PGI and IIP members present during the joint meetings agreed to recommend the creation of a new programme. They thereby cleared the way for a final decision to be taken by UNESCO's governing bodies—the Executive Board and the General Conference—and launched the preparation of the new programme.

The following figure illustrates the background of the second episode of UNESCO's policy discourse:

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<sup>188</sup> Quéau, Personal interview.



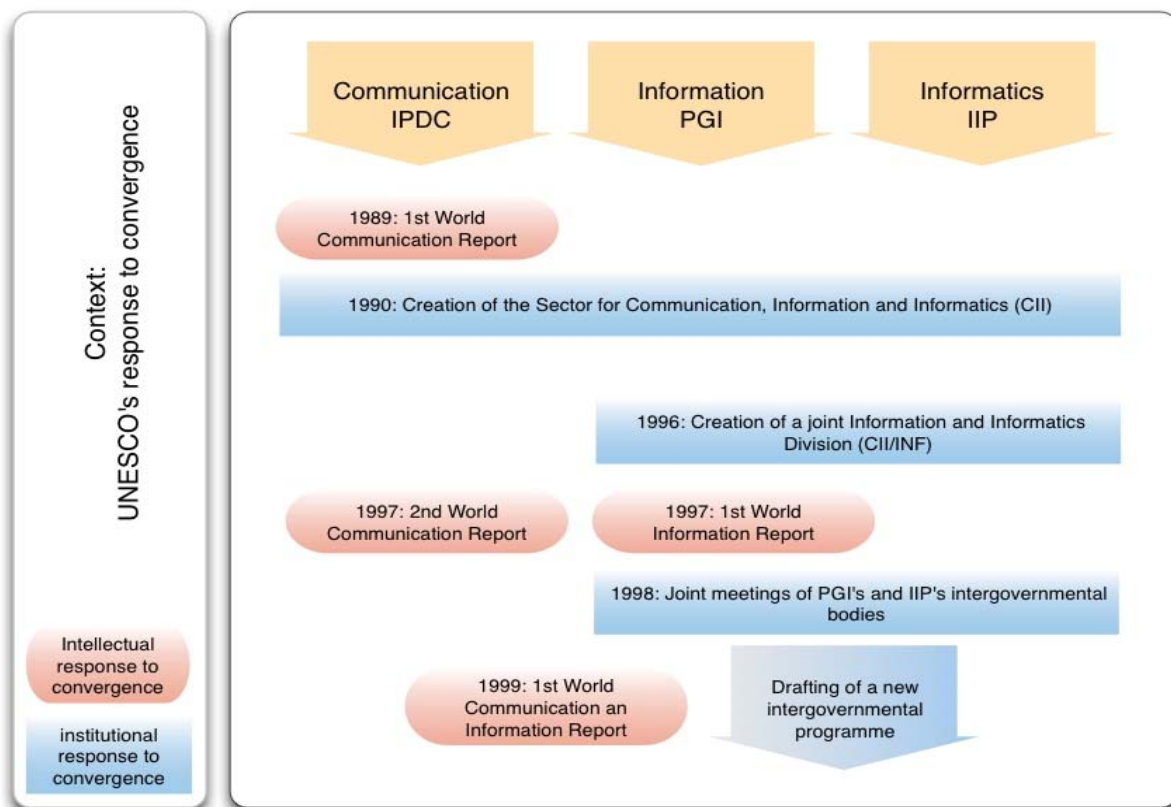


Figure 14: General context of UNESCO's search for an institutional framework for its response to the information society

The illustration shows that, while the assessment included in the world reports reflected the convergence of information and communication, the institutional restructuring only reflected the convergence of information and informatics. Thus, the separation of UNESCO's activities in the field of communication from those in the field of information still continued after the organisation officially had recognised their growing interrelation.<sup>189</sup>

## 2.2 Analysis of the performative dimension: Designing a new programme

Within the general context of UNESCO's response to the different dimensions of convergence, the analysis of the performative dimension of the second episode focuses

<sup>189</sup> For more details on the incompatibility of the communication and information programmes, see also Dieter Offenhäusser, "Die rasante Entwicklung der Informationsmedien stellt die UNESCO vor neue Aufgaben. Bericht von der 28. UNESCO-Generalkonferenz, November 1995", *UNESCO Heute* 1 (1996): 69-74.

on the creation of the new intergovernmental programme with which the organisation tried to address the challenges of the information society. It begins with the decision of PGI's and IIP's intergovernmental bodies to dissolve their programmes in favour of a new structure, a decision that can be regarded as a new acting element in the Actor-Network and thus as an ideal starting point for our description. In addition, this decision not only launched the creation of the new programme; it also fundamentally determined its content as it was linked to a number of recommendations through which the professional communities involved in PGI and IIP aimed to ensure that the new structure would still be susceptible to their influence. These recommendations can be summarised as mainly regarding two aspects of the new programme:

- (1) Firstly, PGI and IIP member linked their approval to recommendations concerning the *institutional aspects of the new programme*. In short, they demanded that the drafting of the programme be intrinsically linked to the debate on its intergovernmental structure and that, before taking any decision on the content of the programme, the PGI Council and the IIP Committee engage in a debate on its future oversight and advisory bodies.<sup>190</sup> It can be assumed that, by privileging the debate about institutional aspects over content-related questions, the involved professionals sought to inscribe their influence into the new programme structure.
- (2) Secondly, regarding the *conceptual aspects* of the new programme, the PGI Council and IIP Committee tried to ensure a continuation of their work by requesting that the new programme should be built on the achievements reached by the two existing ones. In particular, they underlined that the new programme should maintain a balanced approach including both traditional areas of PGI and IIP and the emerging fields and should represent a logical consequence of the increased convergence of activities related to content and carriage of information. The new programme should therefore have a twofold mission consisting, on the one hand, in a focus on content (deriving from PGI's mandate) and, on the other hand, in the promotion of "infostructure"<sup>191</sup> through training and the establishment of information policies (continuing both PGI's and IIP's projects).

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<sup>190</sup> "Report of the ad-hoc Working Group on the future of IIP and PGI", in "Draft of Part IV of the working document for the forthcoming PGI and IIP sessions", drafted by Axel Plathe, PGI/IIP-98/2, August 1998, 18ff (UA: CI/INF/192).

<sup>191</sup> The concept of "infostructure", which developed to be a key word for UNESCO's new programme, is assessed in more detail in sub-chapter 2.3 as part of the discourse analysis (see here page 300ff).

This description of the performative dimension therefore first retraces the process through which the new programme was created; it then analyses in detail how the involved actors translated the above-mentioned recommendations concerning the institutional structure and the conceptual aspects into the set-up of the new programme. However, albeit closely related to the performative dimension, the arguments and discursive elements that were exchanged during the drafting process and eventually inscribed in the programme's definitive documents are only analysed in more detail in the last sub-chapter on this second episode.

The analysis of the drafting process is based on the records consulted in the UNESCO Archives and the documentation that the CII Sector posted on a dedicated website in order to render the drafting process for the new programme more transparent. This website, with the telling title "Creating a new UNESCO programme for a just and free information society with universal benefits", included most draft versions of the programme's description and statutes and all comments received during several consultation processes.<sup>192</sup> Most of its content is still available via the Internet Archive Project and, hence, allows for retracing the progress of the process as well as the actors involved and the arguments exchanged during the drafting sessions. The desk and archive research was complemented by interviews with actors and observers involved in the process, in particular Peter Canisius, René Cluzel, Axel Plathe, Dietrich Schüller, and Philippe Quéau.<sup>193</sup>

### **The drafting process**

When agreeing on the replacement of PGI and IIP, the council and committee members realised that the creation of such a programme was not an easy task. Despite the brainstorming that UNESCO had already conducted regarding the information society, the translation of these ideas into a coherent and innovative programme that would convince member states to dedicate additional budget to that programme, would demand significant efforts from both the experts and the UNESCO staff member involved in the drafting process:

"L'élaboration d'un nouveau programme est chose complexe. Malgré toute la documentation dont on dispose, les diverses stratégies, plans à moyen ou long

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<sup>192</sup>See [https://web.archive.org/web/20020601000000\\*/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future](https://web.archive.org/web/20020601000000*/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future) (last accessed 12 October 2014).

<sup>193</sup> For more background information about the interviewees, see Appendix n. 1, "List of interviewees".

terme, les documents préparés pour ou issus des organes politiques, la préparation d'un programme cohérent pouvant non seulement convenir aux États Membres, mais aussi convaincre les divers secteurs de l'Unesco de l'intérêt qu'ils auraient à y participer activement y compris financièrement est une chose complexe."<sup>194</sup>

In order to retrace the programme's preparation process in a systematic way, it is described below as a series of steps, distinguished on the basis of the involved actors and their role in the process.

#### *Ad-Hoc Working Group: Brainstorming and first outline*

In order to launch the complex process of drafting an entirely new programme, the PGI and IIP members decided to mandate an Ad-Hoc Working Group to elaborate a proposal that could present the basic ideas of new programme to UNESCO's governing bodies. This Ad-Hoc Working Group on the future of the General Information Programme and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme met for the first time in March 1999. To make sure that the wishes of IIP and PGI members regarding the structure and objectives of the new programme were respected, the group was composed of eleven experts selected by the PGI and IIP bureaus.<sup>195</sup> Based on a consultative process, the task these experts were given was to prepare the main line of actions of the new programme and the first proposals for its intergovernmental management structure.

After the initial meeting, the director of the National Library of Canada and PGI bureau member Marianne Scott, who had already drafted a preliminary proposal prior to the meeting, prepared a first complete outline of the programme's description. However, some members of the group considered both the presentation and substance of this first draft not to be innovative enough and, thus, insufficient for convincing UNESCO's member states of the necessity and relevance of such a new structure. In particular the German PGI delegation, which had been pushing for the merge of IIP and PGI since the early 1990s<sup>196</sup>, suggested that an amended proposal should be prepared on the basis of an alternative draft put forward by the German engineer and information specialist Peter

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<sup>194</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted for the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 20 February 1999 (Web archive "IFAP consultation").

<sup>195</sup> The members of the Ad-Hoc Working Group were: Peter Canisius (Germany), Nathalie Dusoulier (Chairperson of the PGI Council, France), Junu Kailay (India), Venâncio Massingue (Mozambique), Tamiko Matsumura (Japan), Theophilus E. Mlaki, (Tanzania), Ludovit Stanislav Molnar (Chairperson of the IIP Committee, Slovakia), Eric Norberg (Sweden), Dietrich Schüller (Rapporteur of the PGI Council, Austria), Marianne Scott (Canada), and Alexander Volokitin (Russian Federation).

<sup>196</sup> Peter Canisius, Personal Interview, 16 September 2014; Metze-Mangold, Personal Interview.

Canisius, former president of the German Commission for UNESCO. Eventually, the Secretariat decided that Scott's proposal would need "substantial revision before presenting it as an attractive, forward-looking programme" to UNESCO's governing bodies, and that Canisius should continue to be involved in the drafting process as an observer.<sup>197</sup>

Some months later, a revised and more advanced draft of the new programme was discussed during the second joint meeting of the PGI and IIP bureaus, which took place in June 1999. There, the members of the bureaus agreed on the general direction of the new programme and requested that the CII Sector prepare a document for submission to the next sessions of the Executive Board and General Conference, which were both to take place later the same year.<sup>198</sup>

*Governing bodies: Seeking the approval of UNESCO's member states*

For an intergovernmental organisation like UNESCO to create a new programme, it needs to be given official consent by its member states. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that member states have to agree to finance the programme either within the regular budget or via extra-budgetary funds, that is supplementary funding that some member states allocate to specific projects or programmes in addition to their regular contributions to the organisation. On the other hand, it is also due to the fact that they have to approve the content of the programme, from the exact formulation of its definitive documents to the concrete fields of activities that are supposed to be carried out within its framework. Therefore, before the experts of PGI and IIP could move forward with the drafting of the programme's description, they had to seek the general approval by UNESCO's governing bodies, namely the Executive Board and the General Conference.

In contrast to the discussions held during the joint PGI Council and IIP Committee meetings, the exchanges within UNESCO's governing bodies about the creation of a new programme were surprisingly straightforward. In October 1999, the Executive Board members unanimously approved the programme's general framework, as outlined by the

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<sup>197</sup> UNESCO, "UNESCO's new 'Information Society Programme' replacing PGI and IIP – preparatory activities", Memo sent by DIR/CII/INF to ADG/CII, CII/INF/AP/99.143, 1 June 1999 (UA: CI/INF/202).

<sup>198</sup> In addition to the representatives of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, the meeting was attended by observers from IASA, ICA, IFLA and FID, and Peter Canisius from the German Commission for UNESCO.

Ad-Hoc Working Group<sup>199</sup>; they recommended that, in order to save time and concentrate on the projects to be carried out by the new programme rather than on its planning, it should immediately be established at UNESCO's 30<sup>th</sup> General Conference which was to take place right after the Executive Board meeting. As a result of this uncontested recommendation, UNESCO's member states officially authorised the replacement of the two existing intergovernmental programmes by a new one during the General Conference in November 1999.<sup>200</sup> In order to ensure a smooth and swift transition, they also decided to establish an interim committee consisting of the members of the bureaus of PGI and IIP, who should finalise the description of the new programme and the statutes of its intergovernmental body while also guaranteeing the continuation of all on-going programme activities.

Furthermore, only six months later, during the following session of the Executive Board in May 2000, the delegates approved the procedure and the timetable for replacing PGI and IIP.<sup>201</sup> The only criticism expressed during the board's debates was that the programme focused solely on the areas covered by the CII Sector. Several members of the board recommended instead that the new programme should have a stronger intersectorial component since new information and communication technologies influenced not only the CII Sector's fields of competence but all areas of UNESCO's activities. For the same purpose, it was also suggested that the draft outline of the new programme and the statutes of its intergovernmental council be submitted for comments to all member states of UNESCO rather than only to those elected to the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, as originally planned.

*Consultation processes: Seeking input and feedback by experts and member states*

The drafting of the new programme's statutes and contents by the UNESCO Secretariat and the national experts represented in PGI and IIP was complemented by two external consultation processes: a first consultation amongst professional experts and a second

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<sup>199</sup> UNESCO, "Proposals for a new programme merging the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP)", 157 EX/11, 13 August 1999 (UNESDOC) and 30 C/14 Add., 29 October 1999 (UNESDOC).

<sup>200</sup> UNESCO, "New programme merging the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme", 30 C/Resolutions, Resolution 36 adopted on 17 November 1999 (UNESDOC).

<sup>201</sup> UNESCO, "Replacement of the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) by a new programme", EX 159/Decisions, Decision 3.5.1, 15 June 2000 (UNESDOC).

one amongst UNESCO's member states. For transparency, all comments received during these consultations were made available on the website set up for the purpose of the new programme by the CII Sector.<sup>202</sup>

The first consultation process accompanied the work of the Ad-Hoc Working Group that drafted the first main lines of the programme. Its aim was to receive preliminary proposals and feedback by information and informatics experts from the member states represented in PGI's and IIP's bureaus and by staff members of UNESCO's other programme sectors. Therefore, the consultation was conducted before and after the meetings of the working group between February 1999 and March 2000. During the entire period, 36 comments were collected, ranging from fundamental reflections on the necessity of a new UNESCO programme dealing with the challenges of the information society<sup>203</sup> and comprehensive outlines of the new programme<sup>204</sup> to minor amendments of the existing drafts.

This first consultation was followed by a second consultation process, which took place towards the end of the drafting period between May and August 2000. This time, the aim was to receive concrete feedback from UNESCO's member states and to implement all necessary changes regarding the values, objectives, content and governing structures of the new programme before they were eventually adopted by the 160<sup>th</sup> Executive Board session in October 2000. Therefore, all member states of UNESCO were consulted through both their delegations and their national commissions.<sup>205</sup>

In total, 34 comments were submitted by 26 different member states, mostly the member states that were represented in PGI's and IIP's intergovernmental bodies at the time. The most substantial contributions were provided by Canada, the Netherlands, Poland and the Ukraine. While most comments expressed a general agreement with the progress of the new programme's outline and its content, several delegations and national commissions suggested comprehensive changes whose implementation would have necessitated a

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<sup>202</sup> Most comments are still available under the category "Contributions" (Web archive "IFAP consultation"). All files, also those not accessible anymore via the links provided on the website, are preserved in the UNESCO Archives (UA: CI/INF/197).

<sup>203</sup> See in particular the submission by the French library expert Nathalie Dusoulier, chairperson of the PGI Council to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process about IFAP, 20 February 1999 (Web archive "IFAP consultation").

<sup>204</sup> See, for example, the document provided by the IIP expert Félix Murillo Alfaro, representing the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics of Peru, 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process about IFAP, no date (Web archive "IFAP consultation").

<sup>205</sup> Recall that most member states maintain permanent delegations to UNESCO. In addition, UNESCO is the only UN agency that also provides for National Commissions, which are usually composed of a large number of national civil society representatives. For further details, see chapter 1 of Part I (see here page 44ff).

substantial revision of the draft documents. In order to build consensus on these issues, the Secretariat decided to convene an informal drafting group meeting that brought together national experts nominated by all the member states that had made comments necessitating a reformulation of the programme.<sup>206</sup> In addition, to strengthen the intersectorial character of the programme, all programme sectors of UNESCO were also invited to take part in the meeting of the informal drafting group, which took place in September 2000.<sup>207</sup> But despite these efforts, the meeting only resulted in very small changes of the description and statutes of the new programme and therefore did not appear to have any significant impact on its definitive documents.

*Interim Committee: Finalising and securing the transition to the new programme*

In parallel with the second consultation process and in cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, an interim committee consisting of the members of the bureaus of PGI and IIP finalised the description and work plan of the new programme and the statutes of its new intergovernmental body. Mandated by the General Conference to ensure a smooth transition between the work of PGI and IIP and the new programme, it also prepared the practical work of the latter. For this purpose, it met for a first meeting in March 2000 and for a second time after the official launch of the new programme in May 2001.<sup>208</sup>

During its first meeting, the Interim Committee decided to propose “Information for All Programme” as the official title of the new programme. Prior to this, “Information Society Programme” had been used as a preliminary name but some experts complained that the term “information society” was too vague and too familiar and would not reflect UNESCO’s ambition to start an innovative and strategically well-defined programme.<sup>209</sup> Other proposals for the programme’s title ranged from “Global Information Commons Programme” (proposed by Philippe Quéau, director of CII/INF) to “Promotion of free and licit information” (proposed by Milagros del Corral, Assistant Director-General for

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<sup>206</sup> All received comments and their analytical summary as well as the handwritten minutes of the informal drafting group’s meeting are available in the UNESCO Archives (UA: CI/INF/196).

<sup>207</sup> The representatives of the following countries took part in the work of the drafting group: Canada, France, Germany, Nigeria, Peru, Slovakia, United Kingdom and Tanzania.

<sup>208</sup> UNESCO, “Report of the Interim Committee for the Information For All Programme on its activities”, 31 C/REP/18, 10 August 2001 (UNESDOC).

<sup>209</sup> The title “Information Society Programme” was implicitly approved by the General Conference in October 1999 (UNESCO, “Proposals for a new programme merging the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP)”, 30 C/14, 13 August 1999, 3 [UNESDOC]). For the criticism of this name, see in particular the comment by Nils Gunnar Nilsson, representative of Sweden to UNESCO’s Executive Board, submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 17 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).



Culture) or “New Information Frontier Programme”.<sup>210</sup> In the end, the title “Information For All”, brought forward by CII staff member Axel Plathe<sup>211</sup>, found the largest support, first, as it alluded to the successful and already well-recognised initiative of UNESCO’s Education Sector called “Education for All” and, secondly, as it embedded the programme’s ambition to improve the access to and the quality of information in its name itself.<sup>212</sup>

After all comments of the interim committee and those deriving from the second consultation process and the meeting of the informal drafting group had been implemented, the 160<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board formally approved the statutes of the new programme and its intergovernmental body in October 2000.<sup>213</sup> As a result, the Information For All Programme (IFAP) was officially launched on 1 January 2001.

Its launch was preceded by a change in the management and name of the Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics. In 2000, the Swiss media expert Alain Modoux, who previously directed UNESCO’s Division for Freedom of Expression, replaced Henrikas Yushkiavitchus as Assistant Director-General of the CII Sector. At the same time, the term “informatics” was dropped from the sector’s name, resulting in the shorter version “Sector for Communication and Information” (CI). In the same spirit, the Division for Information and Informatics (CII/INF), directed by Philippe Quéau, was renamed “Information Society Division” (CI/INF). The changes of names anticipated and reflected the dissolution of PGI and IIP and their merger into IFAP as it emphasised the sector’s focus on information and its societal relevance rather than on technical questions.

The following figure illustrates the different steps of the drafting process from the first meeting of the Ad-Hoc Working Group until the official launch of IFAP on 1 January

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<sup>210</sup> A list of all proposed names was posted on the dedicated webpage of the CII Sector: <https://web.archive.org/web/20000601225555/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/contribute.shtml> (last accessed 15 December 2014). The discussion on the name is reflected in the hand-written minutes of the first meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the Bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, 30 March 2000 (UA: CI/INF/202).

<sup>211</sup> The originators of the various proposals are mentioned in: UNESCO, “Meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the Bureaus of the Intergovernmental Council for the PGI and the Intergovernmental Committee for the IPP”, Draft Background Document, PGI/IIP-2000/Interim Committee/Inf. 4, March 2000, 17 (UA: CI/INF/202).

<sup>212</sup> The Education for All movement was launched by UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank at the World Conference on Education for All in 1990 and represents a commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults.

<sup>213</sup> UNESCO, “Replacement of the General Information Programme (PGI) and of the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) by a new intergovernmental programme”, 160 EX/Decisions, Decision 3.6.1, 22 November 2000 (UNESDOC).

2001. The right side of the timeline shows the involvement of the professional experts, while the left side illustrates the consultation of member states.

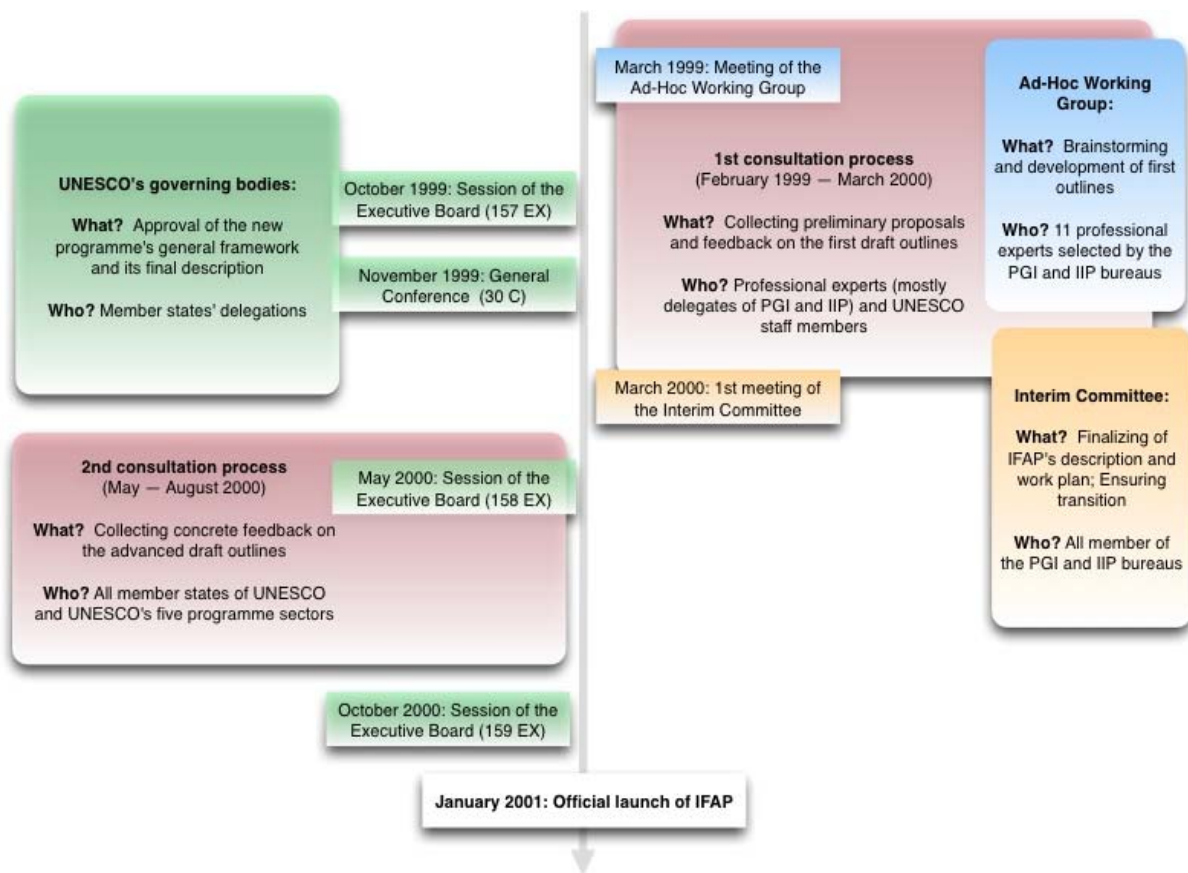


Figure 15: Performative dimension of IFAP's creation process

Before analysing the discursive elements that professional experts and member states brought to the discussions and consultations of the drafting process, it is helpful for the understanding of UNESCO's policy discourse to retrace how, on a performative level, the experts and member states involved in the process translated and inscribed their interests into IFAP's structure and objectives.

### IFAP's institutional structure: The role of experts for UNESCO's new programme

When agreeing on the dissolution of the two existing programmes, the PGI and IIP delegates had requested that the development of the new programme's framework be intrinsically linked to the debate on its intergovernmental structure. And as a matter of fact, in all the steps that took place during the drafting process, the discussions and

submitted comments constantly shifted from institutional to content-related aspects of the new programme. At the same time, some of the actors realised that the close linkage between these very different aspects would necessarily lead to difficulties in the drafting process:

“On pourrait déjà séparer les problèmes en deux parties : d’abord tout ce qui concerne le contenu et la structure d’un nouveau programme y compris les principes généraux qui gouvernent le fonctionnement des projets et ensuite, parce que c’est plus politique, aborder le problème des structures de management, la coopération ou le partage des tâches avec les autres partenaires internes à l’Unesco ou externes, les problèmes liés aux ressources et enfin les mécanismes de transmission aux tutelles. Si on commence à traiter de tous les problèmes en même temps on sera très rapidement dans une confusion extrême.”<sup>214</sup>

For more clarity, the analysis therefore focuses first on the assessment of the debate on institutional aspects before moving to the aspects related to content and objectives.

By giving priority to decision-making about institutional aspects, rather than content-related questions, it can be assumed that the professional communities represented in PGI and IIP sought to inscribe their influence into the structure of the new programme, thus also preserving the formal status of the relations that their respective associations held with UNESCO. And indeed, it is possible to identify two structural means by which they tried to do so: first, by insisting on the formation of an intergovernmental council for the new programme; and secondly, by proposing the creation of an additional expert group that would advise the council on content-related questions.

One of the main arguments in favour of creating a new programme, rather than simply merging the existing two, was that only a fresh start would allow UNESCO to define its role in the new digital environment. In light of this, it is surprising that the actors involved in the drafting of the new programme never discussed different alternatives for its institutional structure. Instead, from the very beginning, there seemed to be a general agreement that any kind of new programme would need to be coordinated —just as its two predecessors had been— by an intergovernmental council.

As early as their first joint session in June 1998, the bureaus of PGI and IIP convened that “only intergovernmental structures can guarantee the sovereignty of Member States

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<sup>214</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted for the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 20 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

in planning and guiding UNESCO's programmes".<sup>215</sup> Moreover, they pointed out that "efficient and effective guidance of programmes in the area of information and informatics needs continuity, constant involvement and good knowledge of the aims, structures and procedures of UNESCO".<sup>216</sup> This fundamental specification for the structure of the new programme was never questioned during any of the subsequent meetings or exchanges. It was also eventually confirmed by UNESCO's governing bodies, in 1999, when the General Conference, without any prior debate, officially authorised IFAP to be "planned and its implementation be guided by an Intergovernmental Council".<sup>217</sup> The topic was only discussed in more detail during the discussion of the informal drafting group, assembled in September 2000 in order to reach consensus amongst the member states that had submitted divergent proposals during the second consultation round. However, at this advanced point in the preparation process of the new programme, it was too late to revise the establishment of an intergovernmental council.<sup>218</sup>

Instead of questioning the intergovernmental structure of the programme, debates only revolved around the number of seats in the council and the funding of its meetings. Some experts involved in the drafting process argued for a high number of council members in order to increase the visibility of the new programme among UNESCO's member states. They argued that a higher number of countries represented in the council could potentially increase its budget because extra-budgetary funds were mainly allocated by member states involved in the decision-making of the programme:

"[I]l ne faut pas oublier non plus que souvent pour que les pays s'impliquent financièrement dans un programme il faut qu'ils puissent y être représentés. Un nombre restreint de représentants signifie peut-être aussi un budget plus restreint."<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> "Report on the Joint Session of the Bureaux of the PGI Council and of the IIP Committee" in UNESCO, "Final Report", PGI bureau, 25<sup>th</sup> session, CII-98/CONF.205/CLD.1, 23 June 1998, Annex 3 (UNESDOC).

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> UNESCO, "Proposals for a new programme merging the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP)", 30 C/14, 13 August 1999, 6 (UNESDOC).

<sup>218</sup> The proposal of installing an intergovernmental council was mainly questioned by the permanent delegate of UK to UNESCO, Geoffrey Haley, in his submission to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process, 31 July 2000 (Web archive "IFAP consultation"). For the discussion on the subject, see the handwritten minutes of the meeting of the informal drafting group, 18-19 September 2000 (UA: CI/INF/196).

<sup>219</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 7 May 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group").

In contrast to this perspective, some member states argued for a smaller group that would meet more frequently and would therefore, first, require less funding and, secondly, be more flexible in responding to the rapid developments in the information and communication field.<sup>220</sup>

In the end, the PGI and IIP members represented in the new programme's interim committee recommended that the number of member states elected to the intergovernmental council should be 36 and that there should be yearly council sessions in the first three years of the existence of the programme, followed by biennial meetings.<sup>221</sup> However, in October 2000, the Executive Board limited the number of council members to 24.<sup>222</sup> One year later, the board modified the statutes of the intergovernmental council for IFAP and slightly increased the total number of seats on this council from 24 to 26.<sup>223</sup> As a result, the PGI and IIP representatives were able to secure the influence of national experts on the new programme through their representation in an intergovernmental structure; yet, the number of its seats was significantly lower than many had initially hoped. At the same time, the mandate of the new council corresponded exactly to what the PGI and IIP members had outlined as it integrated the different functions of the two existing governing bodies: On the one hand, the newly established council was mandated to continue the conceptual and intellectual role of the former PGI Council, while, on the other hand, it also took over the role of the former IIP Committee consisting in the definition of project areas and in the support of all fundraising efforts.<sup>224</sup>

In addition to the intergovernmental council, which would allow national experts to have a say in the implementation of the new programme, the PGI and IIP members involved

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<sup>220</sup> See in particular the comment by Norway, submitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process about IFAP, 10 August 2000 (Web archive "IFAP consultation").

<sup>221</sup> See UNESCO, "Final Report", Meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, 30-31 March 2000, [https://web.archive.org/web/20001203205100/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/meeting\\_mar ch.shtml](https://web.archive.org/web/20001203205100/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/meeting_mar ch.shtml) (last accessed 3 March 2015).

<sup>222</sup> UNESCO, "Replacement of the General Information Programme (PGI) and of the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) by a new intergovernmental programme", 160 EX/17 Rev., 2 October 2000 (UNESDOC) and 160 EX/Decisions, Decision 3.6.1, 22 November 2000 (UNESDOC).

<sup>223</sup> UNESCO, "Amendment to the Statutes of the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme", 162 EX/Decisions, Decision 3.7.2, 27 November 2001 (UNESDOC).

<sup>224</sup> While the statutes clearly defined the role of the intergovernmental council for conceptualising and planning IFAP's activities, it does not, however, grant the council any advisory capacity vis-à-vis UNESCO's regular programme. The council's mandate thereby differs from the former mandate of PGI's and IIP's governing bodies, which—in addition to the projects carried out in the context of the two programmes—also advised the organisation on all other activities regarding their fields of competence and had, thus, significant influence on the general programme planning of the organisation (Dietrich Schüller, Personal interview, 15 November 2013).

in the drafting process also considered a second option to secure their influence. The early drafts of IFAP's statutes foresaw the establishment of an additional group of 30 experts, who were to advise the programme and its intergovernmental council on arising issues and challenges. In contrast to the council members, these experts were not supposed to have any decision-making power and would not represent governments but speak in their personal capacity, similar to the individual members of the Executive Board during UNESCO's early years. Consequently, they should also be appointed not by UNESCO's governing bodies but by the council itself.<sup>225</sup>

This proposal is insofar interesting as it would have allowed to integrate into the planning and management structure those experts who had a long working relationship with either PGI or IIP but who would not find their place within the council of the newly set-up programme. In addition, it offered the possibility to seek for additional competences regarding digital technology, which many of the traditional PGI and IIP members lacked as their competence traditionally concerned analogue information services. However, several members of the Ad-Hoc Working Group expressed doubts about the usefulness and relevance of such an additional expert group. Their main concern was that this arrangement would lead to the redundancy of efforts by two bodies with similar functions: if the expert group was already to perform the substantial work, the council, composed of experts mandated by their national delegations, would only be left to decide on whether or not accept the proposals of the group. In the long run, this would undermine the legitimacy and expertise of the council members.<sup>226</sup> As a result of these concerns, the proposal regarding the expert group was abandoned in the course of the drafting process and did not appear in any of the final statutes of the programme. Instead, priority was given once more to the expertise provided by the council members themselves, which was seen as a crucial element for the success of the new programme.<sup>227</sup>

This expectation was well expressed during the interim committee's meeting by Alain Modoux, who had replaced Henrikas Yushkiavitchus as Assistant Director-General of UNESCO's Sector for Communication and Information in 2000:

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<sup>225</sup> "The Information Society Programme. Envisioning the Future", revised draft for IFAP prepared by Marianne Scott, 26 April 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Drafts"). See also Appendix n. 3, "Selected UNESCO documents".

<sup>226</sup> For the criticism on the idea of the expert group, see the comments submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group by Eric Norberg, Tamiko Matsumura, and Nathalie Dusoulier, May 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group").

<sup>227</sup> Ironically, when the success of the new programme was evaluated in 2007, the evaluators viewed the lack of knowledge and experience in the specific areas of the programme's interest as a major weakness. They therefore recommended the creation of an advisory board, very similar to the expert group whose creation had initially been considered but eventually abandoned (Michael Gurstein and Wallace Tayler, *Evaluation of the Information for All Programme (IFAP)* [Paris: UNESCO, 2007], 10).

“The future Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All Programme [...] is the first intergovernmental body of the UN system exclusively devoted to ICT issues. The expectations in its effectiveness and efficiency are, therefore, high and its responsibilities great. It is clear: If the intergovernmental body is weak, the Information for All Programme will not succeed.”

Consequently, he demanded that those member states of UNESCO that were the most experienced with the new digital challenges propose their best experts as members for IFAP’s intergovernmental council:

[...] But the particular strength of UNESCO is its close contact with the professional communities and NGOs. What the Council needs in addition to this network, is a strong membership composed of countries dedicated to and experienced in the area of ICTs, a wide range of experts and motivated donors. Only if the General Conference succeeds in electing influential council members and in sending the best experts to its meetings, it will have great potentials and will be able to adapt itself to the challenges posed by ICTs.”<sup>228</sup>

By doing so, the new ADG —at least rhetorically— granted the professional communities the role they were trying to attain when designing the management aspects of the programme. But at the same time, he also placed on their shoulders the responsibility for IFAP’s success and, hence, for UNESCO’s institutional response to the challenges posed by digital technologies for its fields of mandate.

### **IFAP’s objectives: Practical assistance or societal impact?**

While an agreement on the new programme’s institutional structure was easily found, reaching consensus on its objectives and main areas of activity appeared much more difficult. A balance had to be found between the new priority given to digital technology and a certain degree of continuity regarding IIP’s and PGI’s objectives. In order to ensure their legacy, PGI and IIP members had recommended that the new programme should, ideally, keep as many of the existing activities as possible, while, at the same time, updating all general objectives and the concrete goals of the activities, in order to better respond to the growing importance of digital technology.

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<sup>228</sup> UNESCO, “Opening remarks by Alain Modoux, ADG/CI”, Meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the bureaux of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, 30 May 2000, [https://web.archive.org/web/20001203205100/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/meeting\\_mar\\_ch.shtml](https://web.archive.org/web/20001203205100/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/meeting_mar_ch.shtml) (last accessed 3 March 2015).

At the beginning of the drafting process, several IIP delegates expressed the fear that, within the new structure, the objectives of the weaker IIP would simply be absorbed by the stronger PGI that could rely on the more loyal support of UNESCO's member states due to its long and successful history. Consequently, the IIP members involved in the drafting were initially much more reluctant to agree to the dissolution or to a fusion of the existing structures.<sup>229</sup> For them, the two areas of information and informatics were clearly different and only an "intelligent, balanced solution" could guarantee that the newly set-up programme would "not lose the identity of informatics".<sup>230</sup> In addition, especially representatives from less developed member states emphasised the important role of IIP's work in the developing world, where its practical projects had contributed significantly to increasing capabilities and training related to informatics.<sup>231</sup> In contrast to this, many PGI members considered that informatics was already an inherent part of the work carried out within the context of PGI, for example when applying the tools provided by computer scientists to the work of archives and libraries. Therefore, in their view, IIP was doing nothing that was "alien to PGI" and its activities could easily be integrated in the PGI structure.<sup>232</sup> In order to overcome the controversy in which both professional communities involved in the two distinct intergovernmental programmes were trying to defend their priorities, it was proposed that the new programme should not simply combine the two fields but actually reflect their convergence:

"Only integrated operations concerning information and informatics issues at the same time will have optimal results. The information society needed synergy through real cooperation and a fully integrated approach of all professions involved."<sup>233</sup>

Consequently, the content and objectives of the new programme should not simply merge the existing programme's objectives and projects. Rather, they should represent an entirely new approach. Using some of the existing elements in order to assure continuity in UNESCO's activities, the goal was for the new programme to reflect UNESCO's strategy regarding the information society and, therefore, to focus on the consequences of

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<sup>229</sup> René Cluzel, Personal Interview, 22 April 2014.

<sup>230</sup> Comment made by the Peruvian IIP expert Félix Murillo Alfaro during the 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, see handwritten minutes of the meeting, 23 June 1998 (UA: CII/INF/195).

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Comment made by the Austrian PGI expert Dietrich Schüller during the 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the PGI and IIP bureaus, see handwritten minutes of the meeting, 23 June 1998 (UA: CII/INF/195).

<sup>233</sup> UNESCO, "Report by the Intergovernmental Council for PGI and report by the Intergovernmental Committee for IIP on their respective activities", 30 C/REP.16, 26 July 1999, 4 (UNESDOC).



digital technology for UNESCO's mandate, not only in the fields of communication and information but also for culture, education and science.

Due to this overly ambitious task, the first drafts of the programme comprised an unmanageably large collection of objectives relating to a wide range of abstract goals and activities that UNESCO was supposed to implement. During the drafting process, these objectives and areas of activity were gradually reduced both in their number and their ambitions.<sup>234</sup> In the end, *six objectives* remained, which still covered an important number of different fields but whose formulation was more precise than in the initial drafts:

- Promote and widen access through the organisation, digitisation and preservation of information;
- Support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training;
- Promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society;
- Support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics;
- Promote the use of international standards and best practices in communication, information and informatics in UNESCO's fields of competence;
- Promote information and knowledge networking at local, national, regional and international levels.

In addition, the description of the programme identified *five main areas of activity*, each grouping together a number of indications to be achieved within the first seven years of the programme's existence. Surprisingly, the main areas of activity were not linked to the objectives themselves but either repeated them or added entirely new goals:

- Area 1: Development of international, regional and national information policies;
- Area 2: Development of human resources and capabilities for the information age;
- Area 3: Strengthening institutions as gateways for information access;
- Area 4: Development of information processing and management tools and systems;
- Area 5: Information technology for education, science, culture and communication.<sup>235</sup>

While the advanced drafts of IFAP's description were generally received very positively by UNESCO's member states, it was this discrepancy between the programme objectives and the main areas of activity that represented one of the main sources of criticism.

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<sup>234</sup> All draft versions of the new programme were posted on the dedicated page of the UNESCO website (Web archive "IFAP Drafts").

<sup>235</sup> The final version of IFAP's definitive documents can be found in UNESCO's Executive Board documents: UNESCO, "Replacement of the General Information Programme (PGI) and of the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) by a new intergovernmental programme", 160 EX/17 Rev., 2 October 2000 (UNESDOC). See also Appendix n. 3, "Selected UNESCO documents".

Several countries complained that this mismatch resulted in a lack of transparency and clearness of the programme presentation:

“While we strongly support the idea of setting a fixed number of objectives, we have difficulty seeing the relationship between the [...] programme objectives and the five programme areas. The draft programme makes a rather vague impression as a result. The new programme would be clearer if objectives and areas were linked to each other more coherently [...].”<sup>236</sup>

Beside their incoherence, IFAP’s objectives were also criticised for not being ambitious enough and for being too conservative due to the “lack of modern buzzwords” in their formulation<sup>237</sup>, as well as for being “too utopic” and hence not precise and realistic enough to provide clear guidance for their implementation.<sup>238</sup>

The critical remarks regarding the vague formulation of the programme objectives all appeared to result from the same problem. Indeed, despite the PGI and IIP members’ efforts to design an entirely new programme instead of just merging the existing ones under a common structure, IFAP’s description seemed to suffer from the discrepancy between the objectives of the two former programmes: a discrepancy between the aim of offering practical assistance (as formerly provided by IIP with regard to informatics) and the aim of providing theoretical and conceptual guidance (as previously done by PGI with regards to libraries, archives and specialised information services).

Thus, without it being specified, IFAP’s objectives and its five main areas of activity constantly shifted between practical support, on the one hand, —for example through training programmes and by supporting the production of local content— and, on the other hand, more conceptual or normative goals like the promotion of international reflections on ethical challenges of the information society or the development of national digitisation policies.<sup>239</sup>

Besides the difference in their nature, these objectives and areas of activity also differed with regard to their target beneficiaries: while practical assistance that generally targeted

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<sup>236</sup> Comment submitted by the Netherlands’ National Commission for UNESCO for the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process about IFAP, 7 August 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>237</sup> Comment made by Rainer Kuhlen, representative of Germany, during the first meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the Bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, see handwritten minutes, 30 March 2000 (UA: CI/INF/202).

<sup>238</sup> Comment made by Nathalie Dusoulier, representative of France, during the meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the Bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, see handwritten minutes of the meeting, 30 March 2000 (UA: CI/INF/202).

<sup>239</sup> The term “digitisation” is defined in this thesis as the material process of converting analogue streams of information into digital bits. In contrast, the term “digitalisation” is used to describe the way in which all domains of social life are restructured around and impacted by digital communication and infrastructures.

developing countries amongst UNESCO's member states would benefit most from the respective activities, IFAP's conceptual goals addressed more advanced information societies and, accordingly, developed countries.<sup>240</sup>

As a result, the new programme seemed to lack not only consistency but also a clear identity: it was neither a practical programme addressed at developing countries like IPDC, the intergovernmental programme for the field of communication that was also coordinated by the CII Sector; nor was it a clearly political and normative programme that aimed at influencing the societal impact of digital technology or, at least, at fostering a global reflection on the topic, as had been the case within UNESCO's INFOethics conferences.<sup>241</sup>

Only one of these two tasks would already have been enough for an intergovernmental programme but their combination made their translation into a coherent set of programme activities nearly impossible. In addition, it led to confusion among UNESCO's member states and, consequently, resulted in limited interest in the programme itself. Indeed, UNESCO's member states seemed aware that the organisation had neither the resources nor the expertise to enable it to play a significant role for the implementation of practical development projects on the ground, and they therefore shied away from dedicating additional funding to the respective activities. Moreover, they were reluctant to endorse and finance a programme that had a mainly normative mandate and that aimed at finding policy solutions to societal challenges that either did not concern them—as was the case for many developing countries—or that went against their economic interests, like the support of copyright exemptions for online content.<sup>242</sup> Consequently, the vague and incoherent formulation of IFAP's objectives and mandate significantly reduced its credibility and relevance in the eyes of many member states of UNESCO.

In the end, the Information For All Programme was launched in January 2001 but already harboured the origins of future problems in its statutes and definitive documents. IFAP's objectives and main areas of activity appeared to be a reconfiguration of what had been

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<sup>240</sup> Some observers actually recognised this discrepancy, for example the French expert Michel de Rocca who describes it as a dichotomy between applied activities and activities of a horizontal nature: “une dichotomie est établie en général entre les actions de nature applicative et sectorielle (TIC pour l'éducation, la formation [...]) et [les] actions de nature horizontales comme [l']aide à la mise en place des politiques nationales, les aspects éthiques et juridiques [...]. Ces actions horizontales bénéficient souvent à tous ou à un groupe de pays.” Comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process about IFAP, 25 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>241</sup> A similar conclusion was reached by the two scientists who evaluated IFAP's performance in 2007. See Gurstein and Tayler, *Evaluation of the Information for All Programme (IFAP)*, 22ff.

<sup>242</sup> Metze-Mangold, Personal Interview.

done before within PGI and IIP, including an update of certain elements that was not, however, radical enough to represent a fresh start. In addition, the programme's description lacked coherence, which made it seem implausible that IFAP would ever be able to achieve its objective. This caused one observer to remark that "the programme has a tendency to be as vague as the phrase *information society* itself [original emphasis]".<sup>243</sup>

However, despite these weaknesses, IFAP did fulfil its role as UNESCO's institutional response to the challenges of the information society. In addition, within its statutes, objectives and main area of activities, UNESCO addressed several aspects of its discourse on the challenges of the information society, which had been developed during the INFOethics conference. By inscribing them in the definitive documents of the new programme, the actors involved in the drafting process institutionalised these discursive elements and, that way, contributed very significantly to the institutionalisation of UNESCO's official policy discourse on the information society. These discursive elements and the way in which they were inscribed in the Information For All Programme are analysed in the following, final sub-chapter on this second episode of UNESCO's response to the information society.

### **2.3 Analysis of the discursive dimension: Institutionalising policy discourse**

The creation of IFAP was UNESCO's official attempt at fostering its activities dealing with the consequences of digital technology and at finding an institutional response to the information society's impact on the organisation's fields of mandate. Therefore, not only did the experts and member states involved in the drafting process put great effort into designing the statutes of the programme's intergovernmental body and its objectives and main areas of activity. They also paid great attention to the concrete formulation of the new programme's definitive documents as they were well aware that the elements inscribed in these documents would define a significant part of UNESCO's official policy discourse regarding the field of information and the impact of digital technology on all fields of its mandate.

But despite all efforts dedicated to the drafting process, the programme's description was generally considered to be very vague. In many regards, this can lead back to competing attempts of the various professional communities to secure their influence by

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<sup>243</sup> Nils Gunnar Nilsson, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 17 May 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group").

emphasising the importance of their particular area of competence. Moreover, the imprecision of IFAP's description was due to the "absence of clear or operational definitions of key terms (for example 'universal access to information', 'global information society', 'knowledge networking')".<sup>244</sup> But most importantly, the flaws of IFAP's description can be attributed to the discrepancy between its objectives to serve either as a practical assistance programme or as a normative and political programme that fosters discussions on societal challenges. Indeed, when looking more closely at the various drafts and the discursive exchanges during their drafting process, it is possible to observe that this general discrepancy was further enhanced by several subordinate dichotomies that were inscribed in the programme. These dichotomies were:

- (1) the dichotomy between "old" and "new" information services;
- (2) the dichotomy between "infostructure" and "infrastructure"; and
- (3) the dichotomy between a programme that focuses on problems of information access in the developing world or one that follows a more holistic approach and considers all different aspects concerning the access to and usage of information.

It would certainly be possible to identify further important issues, and even other dichotomies, within IFAP's description and within the discussions during the drafting process. But as it is possible to ascribe most of the written and oral comments and arguments expressed during the process to one of these three dichotomies, they can be considered as emblematic for the discursive exchanges during this episode. In addition, each dichotomy picks up on one or several of the storylines that had been identified for the episode of the INFOethics conferences. Therefore, the analysis of the discursive dimension of this second episode scrutinises how the above-mentioned dichotomies emerged from the discussions and were inscribed in the definitive documents of the new intergovernmental programme. In contrast to the discourse analysis of the INFOethics debates, the following analysis does not summarise all discursive exchanges by identifying emblematic issues and competing storylines; instead, priority is given to the inscription of arguments in the definitive documents of IFAP and, thus, to the institutionalisation of policy discourse, in ANT-tradition.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Gurstein and Tayler, *Evaluation of the Information for All Programme (IFAP)*, 37.

<sup>245</sup> Recall that, in ANT-tradition, "inscription" refers to the efforts of an actor to fix an alignment of interests in a stable way, for example through a written text or agreement, or —more ideally— in an organisational setting like the creation of a certain procedure or a project. In ADA, this process is "discourse institutionalisation": "If a discourse solidifies in particular institutional arrangements [...] then we speak of discourse institutionalization" (Marteen Hajer, "Coalitions, Practices, and Meaning in Environmental Politics: From Acid Rain to BSE", in *Discourse Theory in European Politics*, ed. Jacob Torfing and David Howarth [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 303).

The argumentative discourse analysis in this chapter is based on all available documentation reflecting the drafting process for the new programme. This includes the official and unofficial documents of the (joint) meetings of PGI's and IIP's intergovernmental bodies since 1996 (including handwritten minutes); the documents of UNESCO's Executive Board and General Conference concerning the creation of a new programme; all documentation of the Ad-Hoc Working Group, the drafting group and the interim committee (official documents, drafts, emails and handwritten minutes); and —most importantly— all comments submitted to the two consultation processes carried out for the purpose of defining IFAP's objectives and statutes. In total, more than 60 comments have been coded using the Dedoose software, resulting in 76 text excerpts categorised by 12 different codes.<sup>246</sup> In addition, all handwritten minutes (of a length ranging from 7 to 28 pages) and other relevant meeting documents have been analysed manually in order to additionally support the arguments identified through the coding process.

### **Dichotomy between “old” and “new” information services**

The first dichotomy that regularly came up during the exchanges and discussion of the drafting process was the differentiation between “old” and “new” information services and technologies. “Old” thereby referred to traditional information services as provided by librarians, archivists and other information specialists traditionally involved in the preservation, organisation, storage of information contained in physical documents and access to that information; in contrast, “new” referred to all services provided by and via digital technology and the Internet.

In order to understand why the experts involved in the drafting process were attentive to clearly differentiate between traditionally and digitally provided information services, it is necessary to recall that the field of (professional) information management has been a major concern of UNESCO since its inception. As such, it is fixed in its constitutional mandate that the organisation should contribute to the “free flow of information” and

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<sup>246</sup> The low number of 76 excerpts for this chapter, compared to the 600 excerpts coded for the discourse analysis of the first episode, is due to a much more stringent selection of meaningful arguments and a reduced number of codes. In addition, while the analysis of the discursive dimension of the first episode was aimed at giving an overview of the various discursive elements, it now focused more clearly on those elements that were actually inscribed in the final documents; consequently, many other elements and arguments that were only occasionally raised by some actors were left out of the coding and the subsequent analysis.

“maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge [...] [through] the exchange of publications, objects of artistic and scientific interest and other materials of information”.<sup>247</sup> Accordingly, the organisation has a long history of programmes dedicated to the management of information through libraries, archives and other kinds of specialised information services. Indeed, even before PGI was founded in 1976, UNESCO had already been dealing with the professional concerns of archivists and libraries in the framework of the NATIS programme and with questions regarding scientific and technical documentation and information in the context of UNISIST.<sup>248</sup> It therefore also maintained longstanding relationships with the professional communities of librarianship, archiving and information sciences and with the major professional associations in the respective fields.<sup>249</sup> Over the years, these communities and institutions had found in UNESCO an important forum for their political and professional concerns and were well-established partners of UNESCO due to the formal relations that associations as IFLA and ICA held with UNESCO; unsurprisingly, they were not willing to give up this close partnership with the dissolution of PGI, UNESCO’s last programme explicitly dedicated to their fields of competence.

For this reason, many of the experts involved in the drafting of IFAP continuously emphasised that, although the new programme should focus on the possibilities offered by digital technologies, the more traditional information services and professions should not be forgotten. They insisted on three important aspects in particular, namely the *balance between old and new information services*, the *preservation of information* and *copyright exemptions*.

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<sup>247</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

<sup>248</sup> The history of these programmes is discussed in Part I (see here page 76ff).

<sup>249</sup> Recall that the institutions traditionally involved in UNESCO’s archives and library programmes were—most prominently—the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Federation for Documentation (FID), with the latter losing importance towards the end of millennium and being dissolved in 2002. In addition, for the field of scientific and technical information, UNESCO also collaborated closely with the International Council for Science (ICSU).

### *Balance between old and new information services*

The argument regarding “traditional” forms of information services that arose most frequently in the discussions of the drafting process was the argument that, in order to guarantee that the approach of the new programme would not simply consist in thoughtlessly embracing digital opportunities, it needed to be based on an even and diligent consideration of both new and old information technologies. Since digital infrastructures in many member states of UNESCO, in particular in developing countries, were not sufficiently available, the access to and processing of information was still entirely in the hands of traditional information services, to the degree that these services existed in these countries. Therefore, in order to be particularly attentive to the needs of countries with limited access to digital technologies and networks, many argued that the programme should be based on a balance between traditional and digital information technologies and services:

“[L]e nouveau programme qui résultera de la fusion doit absolument trouver un *équilibre entre les nouvelles technologies de l’information et de communication et les technologies traditionnelles*. Il va sans dire que dans de nombreux pays les infrastructures correspondantes n’existent simplement pas ou, si elles existent, créent plus de besoin qu’elles n’apportent de solution [emphasis added].”<sup>250</sup>

While some experts complained that the first drafts of the new programme’s outline would not sufficiently mention the urgency of this balanced approach<sup>251</sup>, others warned that by insisting on this equilibrium, a dichotomy between traditional and digital services would be inscribed into the programme’s definitive documents. In their opinion, this dichotomy was an invention imposed by some PGI and IIP bureau members; hence, it did not reflect the reality in which archives and libraries were not an obsolete relict of past times but a key element of the information society (“la réalité est différente — archives et bibliothèques sont en plein centre de la société de l’information”).<sup>252</sup> By inscribing the dichotomy between old and new information services into IFAP’s description, these experts feared that they would confirm the opinion of those denying that libraries and

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<sup>250</sup> Comment by Christoph Graf, director of the Suisse Federal Archives, submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process about IFAP, 22 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>251</sup> Comment by Nathalie Dusoulier, French representative during the 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP committee, see handwritten minutes, 23 June 1998 (UA: CI/INF/195).

<sup>252</sup> Comment by the representatives of the International Council of Archives; a similar perspective was expressed by Philippe Quéau, Director of CII/INF (“dichotomy traditional/new is imposed by the bureau”), and Dietrich Schüller, Austrian PGI representative and also from the professional field of archives (“dichotomy does not exist in reality”); 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, handwritten minutes, 23 June 1998 (UA: CI/INF/195).



archives continue to be important players in the digital age.<sup>253</sup> Thus, they warned that, in the long run, this dichotomy would counter their efforts to secure the prominent position of traditional information services within UNESCO's information programmes.

As a result of this exchange, the importance of information services like storing, archiving and providing access were clearly addressed in IFAP's description. However, the experts involved in the drafting abstained from explicitly defining the role of libraries or archives and, consequently, also from opposing these traditional institutions of information management with the new digital possibilities. Instead, the preamble of IFAP's definitive document linked UNESCO's mandate concerning the field of information to the objectives of the new programme:

“To achieve this end and according to its constitutional mandate, UNESCO shall ‘maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge’ by *ensuring the conservation and protection* of the world's inheritance of books, archives and other documents, *however they are stored* [emphasis added].”<sup>254</sup>

In addition, two of the five main programme areas clearly relate to the tasks and importance of institutions in charge of information management:

“Area 3: Empowerment of institutions as gateways for information access”  
and

“Area 5: Development of information management tools, processes and systems.”

### *Securing the preservation of information*

Of the various information management tasks usually carried out by archivists, librarians and information specialists, one task was particularly emphasised in the new programme, namely the aspect of preservation. But while many discussions during the drafting process revolved around the digitisation of content —understood as the material conversion of analogue data (images, video and text) into digital bits— the reference to preservation related mainly to the analogue conservation of information carriers through physical

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<sup>253</sup> This opinion was for example expressed by the representative of the International Federation for Documentation (IFD): “who are the guardians of the information in the WWW? Not anymore libraries and archives!”, 1<sup>st</sup> joint meeting of the bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, handwritten minutes, 23 June 1998 (UA: CI/INF/195).

<sup>254</sup> This quote and all following quotes from IFAP's definitive documents can be found in UNESCO, “Replacement of the General Information Programme (PGI) and of the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) by a new intergovernmental programme”, 160 EX/17 Rev., 2 October 2000 (UNESDOC). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

storage. This was a particular concern of all archivists involved in the drafting process for the new programme and was expressed most prominently by the Austrian PGI delegate, Dietrich Schüller, expert of audiovisual preservation and director of the Austrian Phonogram Archives<sup>255</sup>, and by the Swedish expert Erik Norberg, Director-General of the National Archives of Sweden and Chair of the European Board of the International Council of Archives:

“In spite of concentration on modern information technology the notion of the Information Society cannot be entirely based on digital information and communication technologies but also on access to and use of traditionally stored paper based information. *Paper based information will be the fundamental medium for long term preservation in memory institutions* and for the access needed for longitudinal research for many years to come. This applies not only to the developing world, but also to the developed [emphasis added].”<sup>256</sup>

While physical preservation is certainly of crucial importance for the access to information, it is surprising, however, that during the drafting process for IFAP, comparatively little consideration was given to the new and enlarged storage and conservation possibilities offered by digital technology or to the possibility of providing access to digitised content via digital networks. This disregard might partly be explained by the fact that UNESCO already had a programme that was exclusively dedicated to the preservation of documentary heritage in various parts of the world, which also dealt with the opportunities and risks involved in digitisation for preservation purposes. Indeed, in 1992 —and thus eight years before the inauguration of IFAP— UNESCO had established the *Memory of the World Programme*. It aimed at sensitising governments, international organisations and foundations to the danger that significant collections in archives and libraries might be increasingly damaged or lost due to looting and dispersal, illegal trading, destruction or inadequate housing and funding. The objective of the Memory of the World Programme, which works closely with professional associations like IFLA and ICA, was also to foster partnerships for the implementation of concrete projects aimed at amplifying possibilities for accessing endangered library and archive holdings and contributing to their digital and analogue preservation.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Plathe, Personal interview.

<sup>256</sup> Erik Norberg, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 12 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).

<sup>257</sup> In addition, another part of Memory of the World Programme was to bring documents symbolising the history of humanity to the attention of a wider public. For this purpose, in 1997, the programme established a register to which, every two years, it added a number of selected documents that an advisory committee considered most representative of humanity. For further details about the programme, see UNESCO, “Documentary Heritage in the Digital Age. Interview with Abdelaziz Abid”, *UNESCO Courier* 5 (2007): 3–4.

While the Memory of the World Programme was often named during the exchanges about IFAP, the idea of leaving the preservation of both digitised and paper based information to this programme, and focusing on other challenges instead, was never seriously considered. Instead, although this led, once more, to an overlap between the mandates of two different UNESCO programmes, the archivists among PGI's delegates successfully inscribed the importance of preservation and storage in IFAP's definitive documents. Thus, the preamble mentions:

“New methods for accessing, processing and preserving information raise problems of an ethical nature, which in turn create moral responsibilities, to which the international community must respond. Among the issues here are [...] *the preservation of the world's information heritage* [...]. [...] *Policy-making must focus on preservation and access to information*, with particular emphasis on [...] key institutions, such as archives, libraries and other information centres [emphasis added].”

In addition, the aspect of preservation is also part of one of IFAP's six programme objectives, which stipulates that UNESCO should “promote and widen access through the organization, digitization and preservation of information”.

### *Copyright and fair use*

When reflecting about institutions that were traditionally in charge of providing and preserving information and their changing role in the digital age, many experts also paid regard to new actors entering the field of information. Following the commercialisation of the Internet in the early 1990s and the liberalisation of the telecommunication and information markets, the new actors belonged mainly to the private sector. For the purpose of financial benefit, these private actors were able to provide commercial services for the creation, storage and management of information which exceeded the possibilities that public institutions such as libraries and archives were able to offer due to their often limited finances. In addition, the private actors contributed to the innovation and advancement of the tools and technologies needed to provide these services. As a consequence, these private actors represented both a promise of support and a threat to the existence of the professional communities of archivists and librarians.

Hence, many exchanges and comments during the drafting process wondered how the benefits of the commercialisation could be used while, at the same time, preserving the traditional gatekeepers of information services thanks to exemptions of the commercial exploitation of information:

“With regard to the commercialization of knowledge and informaton [sic] NIP [the New Information Programme] has to consider the commercial participants from the information economy as partners in the realization of the information society (dialogue with providers). It has to develop models that illustrate how the information economy can become aware of its duty to common welfare in a constructive way.”<sup>258</sup>

In this context, the debates about IFAP’s objectives clearly picked up certain lines of discussion about the public or private nature of information that emerged around the same time within the INFOethics conferences. This was particularly the case for the broad theme of intellectual property rights, their exemptions, and their future in the digital environment. As a matter of fact, it is possible, within the exchanges on the subject in the context of IFAP’s creation, to distinguish the same storylines as those identified during the discursive analysis of the previous episode. But in comparison to the INFOethics conference, the discussions about the value of information took a less central position in IFAP’s creation process. Indeed, the question of copyright and exemptions, such as those granted by the fair use principle, appeared mainly to be a concern brought forward by the librarians involved in the drafting, like the French delegate and chairperson to PGI, Nathalie Dusoulier, former director of the United Nations Library in New York and director of the French *Institut de l’Information Scientifique et Technique*:

“On pourrait ainsi poser comme objectifs de revoir les bases de notion de propriété intellectuelle dans le contexte d’économies et de situation nouvelles créées par la Société de l’information. Ceci touche à la protection et à l’extension du ‘*fair use*’ pour l’éducation et la science et au concept de *copyleft*. Si nous n’affirmons pas clairement nos objectifs dans ces domaines, d’autres le feront [original emphasis].”<sup>259</sup>

A similar proposal was made by Vit Richter from the National Library of the Czech Republic:

“It is necessary in developing digital environment to *enforce exceptions in use of works included in a protection by copyright* by enforcing well-founded exceptions or enforcing these exceptions in licence agreements [emphasis added].”<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Peter Canisius (German National Commission), comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 28 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).

<sup>259</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 7 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).

<sup>260</sup> Comment of Vit Richter submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process about IFAP, 30 March 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”). A similar comment was also made by Barbro Wigell-Ryynänen, Senior Advisor on Libraries for the Finnish Ministry of Education, submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process about IFAP 26 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

But while most information specialists explicitly or implicitly supported this proposal, it was opposed by some Western, highly-developed member states during the final consultation process, most prominently by the Netherlands, which requested that UNESCO leave the regulatory aspects like intellectual property rights to organisations like World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).<sup>261</sup> As a result, in comparison to the archivists who were able to inscribe the aspect of preservation in both the new programme's preamble and in its objectives, the librarians were less successful in their attempt to institutionalise their discourse about copyright exemptions in the digital age. In IFAP's definitive documents, the concept of "fair use" does not appear in the formulation of the objectives but is only mentioned in the preamble, complemented by the postulation to respect IPRs:

"New methods for accessing, processing and preserving information raise problems of an ethical nature, which in turn create moral responsibilities, to which the international community must respond. Among the issues here are [...], the *balance between free access to information, fair use and protection of intellectual property rights* [...] [emphasis added]."

By describing the fair use principle as a way to balance intellectual property rights, its inscription into IFAP might have been less far-reaching than hoped by some experts who had called for an extension of copyright exemptions in the digital age. Instead, the definitive formulation followed a moderate position on IPRs that was characterised by the idea that in order to guarantee a balance between private and public interests, there should be a balance between works protected by copyright and those that are freely accessible.<sup>262</sup>

To sum up, the communities traditionally involved in UNESCO's activities related to libraries and archives put considerable efforts into promoting their professional concerns during the discussions that took place in the context of the drafting process. As a result, they successfully inscribed three of these concerns into IFAP's definitive documents: First, they were able to reconfirm the role of traditional information institutions in the information society by explicitly mentioning their tasks and their importance in the programme's objectives. Secondly, the archivists involved in the drafting added the aspect

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<sup>261</sup> See comments submitted by Peter Mulder from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands and by the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO, 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation processes about IFAP, 7 August 2000 (Web archive "IFAP consultation").

<sup>262</sup> This moderate position on copyright exemptions is described in more detail in the analysis of the discursive dimension of the first and third episodes. During the drafting process of IFAP, the position was mainly taken by Milagros del Corral, UNESCO's then Assistant Director-General for Culture (see comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process, 16 February 2000 [Web archive "IFAP consultation"]).

of information preservation to both the programme’s preamble and to its objectives. And thirdly, the fair use exemptions to copyright —a major concern for the librarians contributing to IFAP’s creation— were also mentioned in the preamble, though their protection or extension were not made one of the programme’s objectives. As a result of these inscriptions, it is possible to say that the respective elements in IFAP’s definitive documents expressed a conception of an information society in which not only was the access to information a major political and societal concern but in which the traditional institutions in charge of providing, storing and managing the physical carriers of information still had an important role to play.

The following figure illustrates the inscription of the dichotomy between “old” and “new” information services into IFAP’s definitive documents:

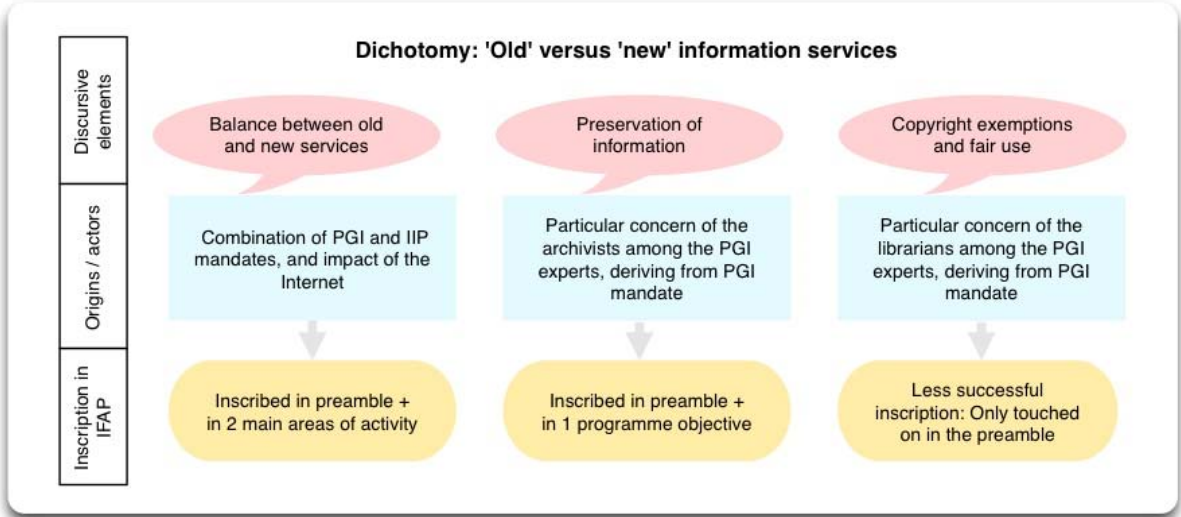


Figure 16: First set of discursive elements / IFAP

**Dichotomy between “infostructure” and “infrastructure”**

The second dichotomy that determined the discussions during IFAP’s drafting process was the differentiation between “infostructure” and “infrastructure”. Just like the dichotomy between old and new information services, this second one also resulted from the convergence of the two former intergovernmental programmes PGI and IIP. With PGI focusing on the content and management of information and IIP on the networks and tools through which information can be accessed, the new programme was to combine the two mandates. In order to do so, the experts involved in the drafting process introduced the concept of “infostructure” — a term which was never clearly defined, and

was applied differently by various actors. In fact, while “infostructure” was recurrently used to refer to “training, the establishment of information policies and the promotion of networking”<sup>263</sup>, it was also often construed as a reference to “content creation, free and universal access, training, as well as support to information services and network and to libraries and archives”<sup>264</sup>.

In general, it is possible to observe within the documents reflecting IFAP’s creation that the term “infostructure” was used mainly to address both the content of information and the structural conditions of information creation, distribution and access.<sup>265</sup> As such, the term was opposed to “infrastructure” which instead referred to underlying technical foundations, such as the hardware, software and the technological networks. Hence, the priority given in IFAP’s mandate to content and infostructure, instead of technology and infrastructure, can also be interpreted as an attempt by the drafting actors to clearly distinguish UNESCO’s new programme from similar initiatives of other international organisations dealing with policy questions related to ICTs and information. They thereby deliberately left the purely technical and economic questions to institutions like ITU and WTO and, instead, emphasised UNESCO’s mandate as the intellectual organisation within the UN system which focuses on policy challenges that go beyond the problem of physical access. This was well expressed by the first drafts of IFAP’s description:

“The ISP [Information Society Programme] will maintain a focus on *infostructures* rather than *infrastructures* [original emphasis]”.<sup>266</sup>

“New information and communications technologies enable the production and exchange of information at an increasing rate and volume. *The idea of infostructure*

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<sup>263</sup> UNESCO, “Proposals for a new programme merging the General Information Programme (PGI) and the Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP)”, 30 C/14, 13 August 1999, 1 (UNESDOC).

<sup>264</sup> “The Global Infostructure Programme. Envisioning the Future”, second revised draft prepared by Marianne Scott after receiving the written comments by the members of the Ad-Hoc Working Group, 10 June 1999, 5 (Web archive “IFAP drafts”). The lack of a clear definition of the term was also criticised by some experts during the drafting process, for example by the Indian delegate Junu Kailay: “As the emphasis of the programme is ‘infostructure’, the term must be clearly defined/its meaning must be explicit wherever used. [...] [I]n the draft paper one gets confused as to whether it is primarily information capture, storage, preservation, dissemination, and/or support to libraries and training or all of it.” Comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 17 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).

<sup>265</sup> A lack of clear definition seems to be a general feature of the term “infostructure”, which is often applied, both in policy texts and in the academic literature, to refer to different concepts. In most cases, it is used to mark the distinction to physical infrastructure, like digital and electronic networks. The sole academic reference within UNESCO’s publications is Michel Cartier, *Le nouveau monde des infostructures* (Montréal: Les Editions Fides, 1997).

<sup>266</sup> “The Information Society Programme. Envisioning the Future”, revised draft for IFAP prepared by Marianne Scott, 26 April 1999, 3 (Web archive “IFAP Drafts”). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

*extends and includes the concept of technical infrastructure development, encompassing as well a broader range of social, economic and legal dimensions to infrastructure development that are essential for information access and sustainable information institutions [emphasis added].*<sup>267</sup>

In the context of the priority given to infostructure, three discursive elements relating to the content of information, rather than to technology, were recurrently emphasised in the discussions and comments contributing to IFAP's creation. They can be seen as the continuation of several strands of discussions that had been identified in the analysis of the discursive dimension of the previous episode, namely the discussions on *information policies*, on *diversity and quality of information* and on the *public domain*. By taking up these issues and inscribing them into IFAP's definitive documents, the actors involved in the drafting process contributed to the institutionalisation of these particular discursive elements.

#### *Developing information policies*

The first aspect to be persistently mentioned as being part of the focus on infostructure was the establishment of information policies. The underlying idea was that the new programme should assist governments in developing national and supranational policies supposed to provide and ensure the structural conditions for the creation, distribution and storage of information and the access to both online and offline content. As for most of the other elements in the new programme's description, this idea was also a legacy of the two intergovernmental programmes replaced by IFAP. Indeed, the development and support of national information and informatics policies had been part of both PGI's and IIP's activities since their inception. And even prior to this, UNESCO had already dedicated many efforts to the development of information policies —mainly in the context of the NATIS programme which had been integrated into PGI in 1977— and contributed to the adoption of respective policy texts in a number of member states.<sup>268</sup>

Some experts involved in the drafting of IFAP wished to build on this success and demanded that the aspect of policy development figure prominently among the objectives and main areas of activity of the new programme. An important advocate of an information policy focus was Peter Canisius, former president of the German

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<sup>267</sup> “The Global Infostructure Programme. Envisioning the Future”, second revised draft prepared by Marianne Scott after receiving the written comments by the members of the Ad-Hoc Working Group, 10 June 1999, 1 (Web archive “IFAP Drafts”).

<sup>268</sup> The history of UNESCO's activities related to national information policies is discussed in detail in the historical chapter 2 of Part I (see here page 88ff).



Commission for UNESCO, who had, in the past, contributed significantly to UNESCO's programmes on information policies<sup>269</sup> and supported the publication of the first UNESCO Handbook on information policies in 1990.<sup>270</sup> He proposed that the new programme give clear priority to the support of policies that—in contrast to most international policy initiatives of that time—do not focus on technical questions but solely on infostructure aspects:

“NIP [the New Information Programme] is UNESCO's platform giving political advice to its member states in all matters concerning the development of the information society. Particularly, NIP must elaborate proposals for the *development of national and supranational information policies, which do not concentrate on the technical aspects of information but on the aspects of information as regards contents and its social environment* [emphasis added].”<sup>271</sup>

Closely linked to the idea of overarching information policies was the suggestion that, within the context of IFAP, UNESCO should continue to serve as a forum for international policy debates on the various subjects linked to information and to information management. Instead of leading to the adoption of policy frameworks coordinating the field of information on the national level, these international exchanges should focus on rules and regulations for the global information landscape. Ideally, they should result in international agreements regarding the exchange of information and its content, as had already been requested in 1945 by UNESCO's Constitution, with its demand that the organisation “recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”.<sup>272</sup>

Accordingly, the inscription of information policy development in the preamble of IFAP's definitive documents makes clear reference to UNESCO's constitution:

“In this context UNESCO with its mandate to promote the ‘intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind’ is uniquely well placed to *provide a forum for international debate, and to contribute to policy-making especially at international and regional levels*. Policy-making must focus on preservation and access to information, with particular emphasis on information in the public domain, on capacity-building, as well as on networking among key institutions, such as archives, libraries and other information centres [emphasis added].”

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<sup>269</sup> Peter Canisius, “Informationspolitik oder nicht?”, *UNESCO Heute* 7-8 (1990): 173; Montviloff, Personal interview.

<sup>270</sup> UNESCO, *National Information Policies. A Handbook on the Formulation, Approval, Implementation and Operation of a National Policy on Information*, ed. Victor Montviloff, General Information Programme and UNISIST, PGI-90/WS/111990, 1990 (UNESDOC).

<sup>271</sup> Peter Canisius (German National Commission), comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 28 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).

<sup>272</sup> UNESCO, *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*.

In addition, policy development was also inscribed as one of the five main programme areas:

“Area 1: Development of international, regional and national information policies.”

### *Diversity and quality of content*

In addition to the development of overarching policies that should coordinate and regulate all information-related activities of a country or region, the debates during the drafting process also went into detail with regard to the aspects covered by these policies. One aspect that was considered particularly essential by many experts was the content of information and the (im)possibility to regulate it efficiently in the digital environment.

When reflecting on the ways in which the content of information and of the Internet could possibly be impacted by national and international policy efforts, it soon became clear that there were two sides to the discussion: while *content control* was regularly mentioned, in particular in regard to unlawful content like child pornography, it was the encouragement of *content creation* that seemed the more salient issue for many experts. Indeed, there appeared to be a general agreement among the actors involved in the drafting process that questions of censorship and avoidance of certain (online) content would not only go beyond the competences of UNESCO; more importantly, it would also be impossible to find any kind of agreement among UNESCO’s member states on how to formulate such concerns within the definitive documents of the new programme. Due to the member states’ distinct legal, moral, religious and societal backgrounds, the mention of “content control” would be interpreted in multiple and very different ways; this could lead to political tensions between more authoritarian governments taking advantage of the formulation in order to justify censorship, and more liberal and democratic member states rejecting the funding and endorsement of a programme allowing for such misinterpretation.

For these reasons, the discussions on the content aspects during IFAP’s drafting process mostly focused on positive aspects of creating and fostering specific content and on the quality of available information. Many experts remarked that in order to allow all countries to progress towards more advanced information societies, they needed to be enabled to provide and access information of quality and relevance:

“The Information Society is developing very differently in different parts of the world. In many countries the problem is still how to get information —not to speak about how to be able to read it— in others the main problem is how to *get*

*relevant information out of an ever-flowing mass of entangled information and disinformation. Building technical infrastructures for local and global information is one thing, the contents of the nets are another [emphasis added].*<sup>273</sup>

By steering the exchanges on content towards quality and relevance rather than towards censorship and control, the experts took up one of the storylines on the access to information that had been identified in the analysis of the discursive dimension of the first episode as being part of the wider debate about inequalities in the global information landscape. And, within IFAP's drafting process, just like during the INFOethics conferences, the emphasis on quality and diversity of information was often justified by the situation of countries regarded as "information-poor". Simply increasing the access to and the quantity of available information was not considered an appropriate means to improving the access to content in these countries. Instead, if one of the overall goals of the new programme was to bridge the global information gap, it had to ensure that the content of the information available in all different countries would be relevant to local needs. Therefore, several experts and member states demanded that the quality and diversity of information rank more prominently among IFAP's objectives:

“Le projet de programme ne mentionne qu'accessoirement le problème de la *qualité* de l'information. La question est délicate car, faute d'être gouvernée, la croissance exponentielle des disponibilités globales d'informations risque de reproduire les évolutions de marché qui ont par le passé conditionné la distribution des biens et des services. Il s'agit d'éviter que ne se dessine d'ici quelques années (si cela ne s'est pas déjà produit) une division du monde en deux parties: une, minoritaire sur le plan démographique, en possession d'outils et de capacités à utiliser une information qualifiée et efficaces pour résoudre ses problèmes; et l'autre, majoritaire sur le plan démographique, submergée par des flux d'informations standardisés par faible qualité, valeur ajoutée et possibilités d'utilisation [original emphasis].”<sup>274</sup>

However, despite the urgency of the information inequalities, some experts questioned the idea that the lack of relevant and qualitative information was a policy problem of developing countries only. Instead, they considered it a general challenge of the information society since, due the abundance of digital and analogue data, countries that

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<sup>273</sup> Barbro Wigell-Ryynänen, Senior Advisor on Libraries for the Finnish Ministry of Education, comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 26 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>274</sup> Comment submitted by the National Commission of Italy to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process about IFAP, 20 July 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”). Similar demands were expressed by a number of developing countries, for example by the delegate of Tanzania who emphasised the “creation of local capabilities” that allow countries to “participate actively in the development of content” (comment during the first meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the Bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, see handwritten minutes, 30 March 2000 [UA: CI/INF/202]).

are generally considered as “info-rich” could also be “info-poor” in regard to the quality of the accessible information (“un pays considéré quantitativement comme info-riche peut très bien être info-pauvre qualitativement”).<sup>275</sup>

As a result, the idea of the quality and diversity of information being a general “ethical” problem of the information society was successfully inscribed in IFAP’s preamble:

“New methods for accessing, processing and preserving information raise problems of an ethical nature, which in turn create moral responsibilities, to which the international community must respond. Among the issues here are the *quality, reliability and diversity of information* [...] [emphasis added].”

In addition, it was again addressed in the programme’s objectives, this time with a more explicit link to the situation of developing countries for which the content of economically stronger countries might not have the same relevance. Therefore, it was specified that IFAP should “support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training.”

### *Information in the public domain*

Another aspect that should be regulated through national information policies, and which was often mentioned with regard to the infostructure aspects in IFAP’s description, was the access to information in the public domain. Being closely linked to the problem of qualitative, diverse and relevant content, the various regulatory and socio-economic questions related to public domain content and the public value of works belonging to the public domain were repeatedly raised in the debates during the drafting process. They were emphasised in particular by the director of CII/INF, Philippe Quéau, the same actor who had already introduced the topic into UNESCO’s strategy documents and the INFOethics conferences.<sup>276</sup> He was supported by several librarians among the experts involved in the drafting process, most notably by Nathalie Dusouliez, chairperson of the former PGI programme, who proposed several times that the access to public domain content should figure more prominently in IFAP’s description:

“On pourrait peut être renforcer aussi le contenu du premier paragraphe en étant plus directifs sur les concepts de la promotion et du développement du ‘domaine

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<sup>275</sup> Comment submitted by the Turkish National Commission to UNESCO during the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process about IFAP, 4 August 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>276</sup> Handwritten minutes of the informal drafting group’s meeting, 18-19 September 2000 (UA: CI/INF/196).

public mondial de l'information' et au niveau de l'accès sur le renforcement du 'concept d'accès universel à l'information'."<sup>277</sup>

However, the topic of the public domain bore a certain potential for conflict. Indeed, the various questions linked to the public domain appeared to be a contested subject during IFAP's drafting process; they did not, however, give rise to the same kind of open controversies as we observed for the INFOethics conferences. Yet it is possible, just like during these meetings, to attribute the differences of opinion regarding the public domain within IFAP's creation to the different conceptions of what is meant by "public domain". In fact, some experts seemed to understand public domain simply as the summary of information produced by public institutions and therefore considered it a source of information that should be freely accessible, for the benefit of the general public:

"On the basis of the universal right to information NIP [the New Information Programme] must efficiently strengthen the *provision of independent and public information that is accessible to all (public domain)*. [...] NIP has to contribute to the objective that *public authorities and public institutions in their function as administrator of public information* will develop into transparent information organizations by using the internet. The overall aim is informational symmetry, i.e. mutual giving and taking of information [emphasis added]."<sup>278</sup>

Others instead linked the topic of public domain to the economic and legal aspects of intellectual property rights and the role of commercial interests regarding the digital information environment. They therefore requested that within the context of IFAP, "UNESCO must intervene on the level of legislation" and foster the perception of information as a "global public good".<sup>279</sup> Following this demand, early drafts of the new programme's description indeed mentioned public domain in connection with commercial aspects and IPRs:

"The ISP [Information Society Programme] will encourage *making national content and public domain information available electronically*. *The challenges to making information more accessible are many, encompassing concerns regarding intellectual property, media and*

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<sup>277</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 7 May 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group").

<sup>278</sup> Peter Canisius (German National Commission), comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 28 May 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group").

<sup>279</sup> Intervention by Philippe Quéau during the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Interim Committee composed by the bureaux of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, see handwritten minutes, 30 March 2000 (UA: CI/INF/202).

*market concentration*, media literacy, technical infrastructure, and sustainability of information access, among others [emphasis added].”<sup>280</sup>

Interestingly, this latter connotation was opposed by different actors: On the one hand, some of the computer specialists and information scientists among the PGI and IIP delegates opposed the idea of information in the public domain being a global public good.<sup>281</sup> On the other hand, it was UNESCO’s then Assistant Director-General for Culture Milagros del Corral who criticised the connection of public domain content with legal questions regarding copyright and fair use, and called instead for a more balanced approach that considers both private and public interests in the informational environment:

“To be available for dissemination, information must exist. Therefore promoting its free circulation implies encouraging forces in charge of its creation and regular communication to the public. The legal framework governing its social status should always try to find the *fair balance between legitimate private interests concerned and public interest* in assuring a wider dissemination of information for the benefit of the whole society. [...] *The concepts of Public Domain and Copyright protection must never be opposed one to the other. They are not opposable. Public Domain means the end of copyright protection* [emphasis added].”<sup>282</sup>

In the end, the difference in opinion led to the public domain hardly being mentioned in IFAP’s definitive document, although it appeared in several paragraphs of earlier versions of the text. It was only listed in the preamble as one of many policy challenges that the new programme should address. In addition, the term was neither defined nor related to socio-economic questions and its meaning and significance were thus left to the reader’s interpretation:

“Policy-making must focus on preservation and access to information, with *particular emphasis on information in the public domain*, on capacity-building, as well as on networking among key institutions, such as archives, libraries and other information centres [emphasis added].”

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<sup>280</sup> “The Information Society Programme. Envisioning the Future”, revised draft for IFAP prepared by Marianne Scott, 26 April 1999, 3 (Web archive “IFAP Drafts”). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

<sup>281</sup> Comment by the representative of the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID) during the joint meeting of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, see handwritten minutes, 24–25 June 1999 (UA: CI/INF/195). A similar concern was expressed by the Peruvian IIP expert Félix Murillo Alfaro during the same meeting.

<sup>282</sup> Milagros del Corral, Assistant Director-General for Culture, comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation process, 16 February 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”). Del Corral’s influence on UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society became even more apparent during the third episode, which is described in the next chapter on the third episode of UNESCO’s response to the information society.

To summarise, the experts involved in the drafting process deliberately tried to distinguish IFAP's objectives and main programme areas from potentially similar activities carried out by organisations with a more technical or economic mandate. They therefore introduced a focus on “infostructure” rather than “infrastructure”, and discussed a range of issues to be covered by this focus. The three most recurrent issues were (1) the development of information policies, (2) the quality and diversity of information, and (3) the status of the public domain. While the first issue was a legacy of UNESCO's past and on-going activities regarding national information and informatics policies, the last two were issues that were debated at length in the INFOethics conference that took place during the same period. However, while the experts successfully inscribed the development of information policies and a priority on content creation and quality of content into IFAP's definitive documents, the outcome of the debate on the public domain was less evident. Due to differing interpretations of the ambition behind a UNESCO priority on public domain content and the disagreement of the experts involved in the drafting, the concept was not given a central place but only mentioned in passing.

As a result of these more or less successful inscriptions, it is possible to state that the respective formulations in IFAP's definitive documents expressed the belief that the access to information through digital technology was not enough to justify the designation “information society”. Instead, both the content of information and the structural conditions of accessing it also needed to be addressed and were therefore given priority within the new programme. However, by inheriting the objectives of its two predecessors, the mandate of the new programme gave priority to the same content-related policy issues as those already present in PGI and IIP. Thus, the experts involved in the drafting of IFAP missed out on the chance to reflect fundamentally on the role of information in an environment increasingly impacted by the pervasiveness of digital technology and networks, and to insert some innovative positions into UNESCO's new programme.

The following figure illustrates the inscription of the dichotomy between “infostructure” and “infrastructure” into IFAP's definitive documents:

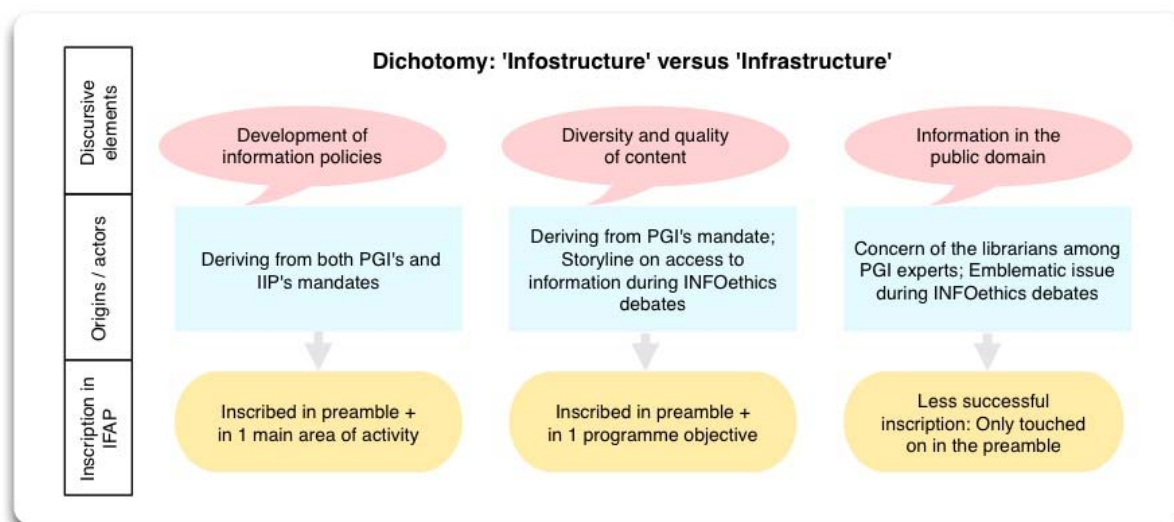


Figure 17: Second set of discursive elements / IFAP

### Information for all – Dichotomy between practical assistance and normative debates

In addition to the lack of innovative elements, the concept of “infostructure” was criticised for reflecting neither the societal nor the individual conditions that enable users to access and process the content of information.<sup>283</sup> These conditions were instead addressed by other discursive elements that regularly came up in the discussions during IFAP’s drafting process. They thereby led to the third and last dichotomy identified as a determinant element for the discursive dimension of this second episode, namely the dichotomy between a development programme explicitly addressed to the less developed among UNESCO’s member states and a more holistic programme that considers various aspects concerning the access to and usage of information not only in the developing but also in the developed world.

Like the previous two dichotomies, this dichotomy also emerged from the attempt to unite the mandates of PGI and IIP, two programmes that generally had distinct target groups. In fact, since its inception, IIP had had a strong focus on improving the situation of developing countries through training of informatics professionals and the development of software and informatics policies adapted to specific local needs. It was initially designed as a competitor to the Intergovernmental Bureau of Informatics (IBI), which considered itself to be a development organisation. After the latter’s dissolution in 1988, IIP eventually integrated some of its practical assistance projects, keeping the focus

<sup>283</sup> Comments during the 2<sup>nd</sup> joint meeting of the bureaus of the PGI Council and the IIP Committee, handwritten minutes, 24-25 June 1999 (UA: CI/INF/195).



on local development support. In contrast, PGI had a much more global mandate, whose objective was to address general policy concerns related to archives, libraries and specialist information services not only in the developing world but also in more advanced information societies. Although it also introduced a more development-oriented approach in the 1980s, it always remained a broader and less practical programme than IIP. As a result, the tensions arising from the merging of IIP's and PGI's two distinct overarching goals can be seen in IFAP's mandate and were surely one of the aspects that contributed to the programme's description being perceived as not focused enough:

“However, the proposed objectives and approach had prompted some to question the scope and ambition of the new programme. It had therefore seemed that it might be necessary to refocus the proposed priorities in order to avert excessive dispersal of the expected results.”<sup>284</sup>

It appears that the dichotomy between a programme for developing countries and a programme with a more global mandate derived from the combination of three major aspects within the same overall mandate, namely the attempts (1) to *bridge the “information gap”*, (2) to promote *information literacy and capacity building*; and (3) to foster the *reflection and dialogue on societal, ethical and legal questions of the information society*.

These aspects not only differed in regard to their beneficiaries but also to the type of activities they entailed: practical assistance projects targeted at developing countries amongst UNESCO's member states for the first two aspects, and more conceptual projects addressed to technologically more advanced societies for the last aspect. Astonishingly, within the concrete formulation of IFAP's definitive documents, the balancing act between these different objectives was not mentioned or reflected in any way. Instead, all three of the above-mentioned aspects were eventually successfully inscribed in the text.

### *Bridging the information gap*

Many of the experts involved in the drafting of the new programme's mandate were convinced that one of its main objectives —if not the single main objective— should be to help to bridge the gap between countries considered as “info-rich” and those considered as “info-poor”. Unsurprisingly, this was most prominently requested by the developing countries themselves, even though not many of them engaged actively in the

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<sup>284</sup> UNESCO, “Summary Records”, EX 160/SR1-15 (13), 25 January 2001, 364 (UNESDOC).

drafting and consultation processes.<sup>285</sup> They thereby clearly linked the discussions taking place in the context of IFAP's creation with one of the discursive strands of the INFOethics conferences, where the access to information and the different means to overcome the information gap were one of the key emblematic issues discussed. In addition, the subject was in line with other international policy debates on communication and ICT in the mid-to-late 1990s in which the digital divide was a central theme. When IFAP's objectives and main programme areas started to be debated, ITU had just announced the plan to host the World Summit on the Information Society, a conference originally dedicated to finding policy solution for the digital divide and to helping developing countries to catch up with the technologically more advanced parts of the world.<sup>286</sup>

To some extent, the idea that the programme should contribute to closing the information gap and to increasing universal access to information, runs like a golden thread through all exchanges and submissions to IFAP's creation. It is also this idea that eventually gave cause to the title "Information For All". Many actors even argued that a long-term objective of the new programme should be to establish intergovernmental agreements in favour of a human right of information ("envisager de créer comme l'a proposé le Directeur du Secrétariat un nouveau 'Droit de l'homme à l'information'"<sup>287</sup>). The idea behind this discourse was that developing countries would benefit not only on the informational level but on various different levels if the access to information were to be recognised as a right in itself:

"With a view to the existing gap between the information rich and the information poor, which will persist in the medium-term, NIP [the New Information Programme] has to develop and implement models which *demonstrate how the information poor can be introduced to the right to access to information*. Through the development of regional networks, electronic markets and information systems for the citizens, information needed in a specific region can be electronically provided and connected with the global information spaces.

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<sup>285</sup> The two developing countries most actively involved in the drafting were certainly Tanzania and Peru. But others countries also submitted comments to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process (Web archive "IFAP consultation").

<sup>286</sup> As mentioned before, it was not only ITU, but UNESCO itself that had plans to host a large international conference dedicated to information for development. But UNESCO later ceded its plans in favour of the INFOethics conference series and ITU's world summit.

<sup>287</sup> Nathalie Dusoulier, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 7 May 1999 (Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group"). The "Directeur du Secrétariat" she referred to was Philippe Quéau, who as director of CI/INF also presided the secretariat of PGI and IIP. His ambition to install a new human right to information is discussed in more detail in the next chapter on the third episode of UNESCO's response to the information society.

*This will also enhance the development of cultural, political and social identities [emphasis added].*<sup>288</sup>

With these kinds of statements, the actors took up one of the storylines about the information gap that had been identified in the previous episode. It consisted in the view that global imbalances could be reduced by increasing the amount of information available in the developing countries and by fostering these countries' capacities to access, process and distribute information; in the long run, as well as leading to progress in the informational field, it would also contribute to the general development of the country.

Despite the information gap being a central theme during IFAP's creation, there were surprisingly few concrete proposals as to how the programme, with its limited budget and its incalculable political influence, could contribute to countering the global inequalities. The few suggestions made showed that all actors were aware that UNESCO had neither the financial nor the organisational means necessary to making a real difference on the global level. Thus, they simply proposed a closer cooperation with other actors, in particular with the private sector:

“UNESCO could adopt a more interventionist approach, for example, by encouraging corporations in the communications and information industries to contribute to regional trust funds. [...] Such initiatives would go much further in achieving universal and equitable access than focusing on socio-cultural objectives alone. At a time when globalisation is a driving force, mainly to the benefit of industrialised nations and the information rich, [...] more interventionist strategies are called for if development assistance programs are to continue to be effective and sustainable.”<sup>289</sup>

These suggestions are insofar interesting as they show that the exchanges during IFAP's drafting missed the strong critical perspective on the information economy that determined most debates during the INFOethics conferences. Instead of viewing the growing involvement of commercial actors and private interests as a fundamental cause (or at least as an reinforcing element) of the global inequalities in the informational environment, the majority of experts involved in IFAP's drafting welcomed them as a potential solution to the new challenges. Consequently, their comments and discussions did not at all question the underlying socio-economic structures and their impact on the situation of information users and producers in economically weaker regions of the world.

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<sup>288</sup> Peter Canisius (German National Commission), comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 28 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).

<sup>289</sup> Gareth Grainger, Australian National Commission to UNESCO, comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 1 February 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

Instead, comments on the information gap during IFAP’s drafting focused mainly on the individual level and on the question of how individual users could be enabled to meaningfully take part in the information society. In other words, they sought the solution to overcome the imbalances in the informational environment itself and in the empowerment of its users.

As a result, the idea that the new programme should contribute to bridging the information gap—which, for many, represented the most crucial objective of the initiative—was inscribed twice into IFAP’s preamble without any reference to socio-economic conditions:

“UNESCO’s mandate ‘to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image’ clearly indicates the part that the Organization is called upon to play in making information and knowledge freely accessible to all, *with the ultimate objective of bridging the gap between the information rich and the information poor* [emphasis added].”

“Increasing technological convergence of information and informatics is neither necessarily conducive to globally shared ethical, cultural and societal values nor to the development of equitable access to information for all. *Particularly people in developing countries must, at all cost, be empowered to participate fully in the global society and to gain maximum benefit from effective and efficient access to information* [emphasis added].”

In addition, for further emphasis, it was also inscribed in the paragraph describing the overall mandate of the new programme:

“The programme shall contribute to narrowing the gap between the information rich and the information poor.”

### *Information literacy and capacity building*

As part of the reflection on how information users could be empowered on an individual level, one aspect that came up very frequently, and that consequently soon developed into a generally agreed priority was the aspect of capacity building. It was motivated by the conviction of many involved actors that the programme would not reach its overall goal to provide “Information For All” if it improved just the structural conditions of information access and the quality of the information’s content. In addition, it also needed to ensure that the people who access the information provided dispose of the capacities and the knowledge necessary to make meaningful use of the knowledge gained:

“The more you gain access to information, the more you need to learn how to handle it in a proper way so that you can refine it to real knowledge, maybe even to wisdom [sic].”<sup>290</sup>

Therefore, it was often suggested that IFAP should contribute to the training of both information users and professionals, namely trainers, teachers and information specialists. Like the general focus on development, the focus on training was also an aspect that derived less from the former PGI activities but rather from IIP’s mandate. This confirms, once again, the different nature of the two programme’s activities: while PGI was always more focused on the level of the professional work and, hence, on the creation, distribution, storage and management of information, IIP centred its attention around the end user and the “consumer” of information technology instead.

When analysing the various arguments for the integration of capacity building into IFAP’s mandate in more detail, it is possible to notice an interesting new dimension added to the existing discourse on the information society. It consisted in the understanding that the access to information should not be perceived as an end in itself. In contrast to what the title of the programme and most of the formulations in its description would suggest, “access to information” and “information for all” were seen as only a first step; what actually matters is the use that people make of it, which ideally consists in the translation of information into knowledge.

This additional dimension was very important for the further development of UNESCO and its policy discourse on the issue. In fact, in the years following IFAP’s inception, the organisation increasingly distanced itself from the concept of an “information society” in favour of the more developed concept of “knowledge society” or in its plural version — as preferred by UNESCO to emphasise the diversity of societies— “knowledge societies”. From 2000 onwards, UNESCO slowly introduced the idea that

“[w]hile information is a knowledge-generating tool, it is not knowledge itself. [...] An excess of information is not necessarily the source of additional knowledge. What is more, the tools that can be used to ‘process’ that information are not always up to the task. In knowledge societies, everyone must be able to move easily through the flow of information submerging us, and to develop cognitive and critical thinking skills to distinguish between ‘useful’ and ‘useless’ information.”<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Barbro Wigell-Ryynänen, comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 26 February 1999 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>291</sup> UNESCO, *Towards Knowledge Societies*, 19.

While the organisation was to publish a world report called *Towards Knowledge Societies* in 2005, which exhaustively introduced the new concept, at the time of IFAP's creation, the idea that information is only a precondition for achieving knowledge was only starting to spread among the professional and academic experts involved in the drafting process. The particular attention paid to learning, literacy and training that should empower users to make this translation from information to knowledge can be interpreted as the first sign of this shift in discourse.<sup>292</sup>

Another important element of the narrative on capacity building was that solely the spread of information literacy would not be sufficient for enabling people to translate the accessible information into knowledge. Instead, the capacities to access, use and process information needed to be complemented by other literacies, most importantly all forms of basic education.<sup>293</sup> The experts favouring this perspective thereby acknowledge that information literacy was only one of the multiple literacies necessary to make sense of the world. Therefore, they argued that the training in information literacy needed to go hand in hand with other forms of teaching and capacity building:

“Merely giving the excluded access to the global information flood will not fulfil the programme’s aim. *People need literacy, computer literacy and functional literacy in order to stay afloat and navigate their way purposefully. It is not the case that this has to be a step process, with training in computer literacy and functional literacy in reserve until basic literacy has been achieved.* All three should be taught speedily and effectively in tandem to children and adults [...]. The term ‘information society’ suggests that information is an end in itself. In fact, the creation of ‘knowledge communities’ to which all have access is ultimately more relevant [emphasis added].”<sup>294</sup>

As a result, the inscription of capacity building into IFAP's definitive documents indeed clearly linked information literacy to other kinds of education and training. In the end, two out of the six objectives were dedicated to the training and literacy aspect, as they stipulated that IFAP should:

“support the production of local content and foster the availability of indigenous knowledge through basic literacy and ICT literacy training”;  
“support training, continuing education and lifelong learning in the fields of communication, information and informatics.”

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<sup>292</sup> Since it only asserted itself after the period under scrutiny in this thesis, UNESCO's discourse on knowledge societies is however not further analysed here.

<sup>293</sup> It is within its priority given to information literacy that IFAP shows the strongest accordance with its namesake, the Education For All initiative coordinated by UNESCO's Sector for Education.

<sup>294</sup> Comment submitted by the UK National Commission for UNESCO to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process about IFAP, 24 August 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

In addition, the importance of the aspect was additionally emphasised by making it one of the five main programme areas:

“Development of human resources and capabilities for the information age.”

*The ethical, legal and societal questions of the information society*

The attention paid to both the information gap and to capacity building reflected the programme’s more practical goals addressed to the less privileged member states of UNESCO. This was in stark contrast to the last discursive aspect discussed in this chapter, namely the proposal that, besides all other objectives, IFAP should foster the reflection and dialogue on societal, ethical and legal challenges of the information society. It was of course inspired by the INFOethics conference series, which had already, at the time of IFAP’s creation, established itself as a forum for international debates on ethical issues related to the information society. The underlying idea was, therefore, to integrate the INFOethics series into the new intergovernmental programme, whose launch could build on and benefit from the success of the conferences.

Stirred by the same idea, some actors also emphasised UNESCO’s exclusive position that allowed it to deal with the ethical dimension of the information society, not only due to the successful conference series but also thanks to its intellectual mandate:

“The economic and social impact of ICT has increased in such way that its development is being analysed at all policy levels and from various perspectives. On a multilateral level, International organisations such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe are engaged in discussing the issue of ICT. We believe that in this respect *UNESCO’s added value lies in addressing the ethical and normative questions* of this development. It is here that UNESCO distinguishes itself from other organisations [emphasis added].”<sup>295</sup>

Yet, despite the broad agreement that UNESCO should deal with ethical and normative questions, there was little discussion about the legal, ethical and societal consequences of the information society and how UNESCO should address them. Hence, the question of what the ultimate goal of the reflections and dialogues of information ethics should be —

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<sup>295</sup> Comment submitted by the Dutch National Commission for UNESCO to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation about IFAP, 7 August 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”). The same idea was expressed by the Polish National Commission during the same consultation round: “La réflexion sur les enjeux éthiques, juridiques et socioculturels de la société de l’information compte parmi ces domaines où l’UNESCO peut jouer un rôle irremplaçable aucune autre organisation internationale ne s’occupant de ces questions d’une manière aussi complexe et globale” (comment submitted to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation, 21 July 2000 [Web archive “IFAP consultation”]).

in other words, whether these exchanges represented an end in themselves or whether they were supposed to result in regulatory measures— also remained unclear.

Indeed, while some actors only called for discussions on ethical issues —and thus endorsed the first storyline on information ethics that had been identified in the discourse analysis of the previous episode— others demanded that the dialogue on the ethical dimension should eventually lead to international agreements — a position that was described as a competing storyline in the previous chapter. The distinction between the two goals is important, however, as they have different implications for the nature of the new intergovernmental programme. The suggestion that IFAP should seek political solutions to the problems posed by the increasing impact of digital technology on all spheres of social life added to its mandate a much more normative connotation than the one induced by the practical assistance activities.

Yet, some experts proposed that the programme should seek exactly these kinds of regulatory frameworks as they would allow for the global inequalities to be countered:

“Internationally accepted recommendations within this area could strengthen the position of small or developing areas in the race for participation on the information highways. They could be of great value [...] to cultural, social and economic development but even more on the development of civil rights. The promotion of civil rights by the use of information technology supported by a legal framework [*sic*] for access to information should be stressed in the document.”<sup>296</sup>

But by including the objective of seeking political agreements concerning legal and ethical questions and civil rights, the drafting actors based the new programme on much less stable ground. It would not only be significantly more arduous to reach consensus among UNESCO’s member states on the concrete formulation of the areas to be covered by these agreements. It would also introduce an inherent contradiction into the mandate: a contradiction between the positive objective of contributing to the free flow of information and universal access, on the one hand, and the negative objective of regulating the informational field through international legal instruments, on the other hand. Yet, this contradiction was recognised by very few actors involved in the drafting process. An exception represented, for instance, the representative of the National Commission of Italy who warned about the contradiction during the consultation of UNESCO’s member states:

“Un autre éclaircissement devrait concerner la manière de dialectiser deux urgences qui sont, au moins apparemment, opposées: la libéralisation de la circulation des informations (en fait, objectif générique primaire du Programme)

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<sup>296</sup> Erik Norberg, comment submitted to the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP, 12 May 1999 (Web archive “IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group”).



et l'introduction de mécanismes régulateurs dans la circulation des informations."<sup>297</sup>

In the end, the experts involved in IFAP's drafting refrained —intentionally or not— from inscribing the search for international agreements on the legal and ethical problems of the information society into IFAP's definitive documents. In fact, the introduction to the programme objectives only mentions “discussions and guidelines for action” and does not refer to any kind of binding regulatory mechanisms:

“The Information for All Programme provides a *platform for international policy discussions and guidelines for action* on preservation of information and universal access to it, on the participation of all in the emerging global information society and *on the ethical, legal and societal consequences of ICT developments* [emphasis added].”

In addition, one of the six objectives reiterates the same formulation:

“promote international reflection and debate on the ethical, legal and societal challenges of the information society.”

In summary, the last dichotomy, which is analysed in this sub-chapter on the discursive dimension of UNESCO's search for an institutional frame for its discourse on the information society, emblematically represents the difficulties that the involved experts had in finding common ground. The various objectives they proposed constantly shifted between objectives entailing practical activities targeted at developing countries and more normative objectives addressed at more advanced information societies. These were, on the one hand, (1) the objective of bridging the “information gap” and the (2) the empowerment of users through capacity building and information literacy; and, on the other hand, (3) the idea that the programme should contribute to the dialogue and reflection on ethical and legal questions raised by the pervasiveness of digital technology in all spheres of social life. While the first two were a legacy of IIP's development projects, the last one clearly tried to build on the success of the INFOethics conference series.

Neglecting the inherent dichotomy between them, the involved actors eventually inscribed all three objectives into IFAP's definitive documents. They thereby contributed to the institutionalisation of the idea that, in order to contribute to the development of all countries towards information societies, it could not be enough to simply address the professional and structural conditions of information access, management and preservation as well as their regulation through national and international policies. Rather,

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<sup>297</sup> Comment submitted by the National Commission of Italy to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation process about IFAP, 20 July 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

in order to enable all users in all countries to benefit from the advantages of the new digital era, its individual and ethical conditions also needed to be considered. UNESCO did this by focusing both on the individual capacities of users to make sense of the accessible information and to translate it successfully into knowledge, and on the ethical and legal challenges that were triggered by the changing role of information and technology for the individual and collective well-being of these users. The actors involved in the drafting process, however, refrained from also questioning the socio-economic structures that caused and exacerbate the global inequalities with regard to access and the distribution and creation of information and the spread and use of the Internet. They therefore avoided the critical debates about the commercialisation of the informational environment that determined the exchanges during the INFOethics conferences. While they might thereby have missed the opportunity to design a new programme that tackled the most urgent challenges that the global community was confronted with in light of the digital inequalities, this omission surely contributed to IFAP’s general endorsement by UNESCO’s member states.

The following figure illustrates the inscription of the dichotomy between a practical programme targeted at developing countries and a more general normative programme into IFAP’s definitive documents:

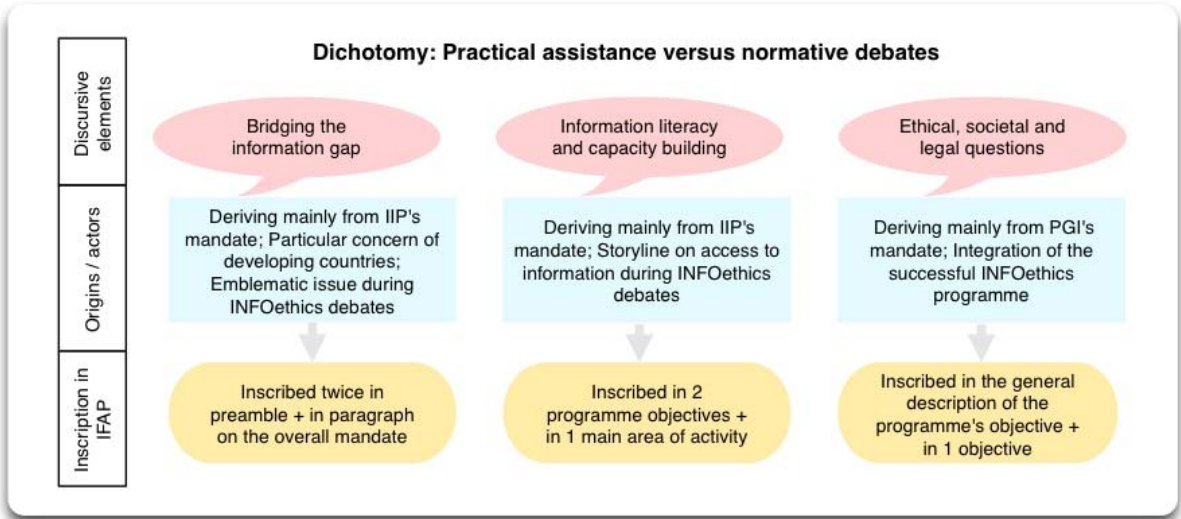


Figure 18: Third set of discursive elements / IFAP

## Chapter conclusion

Through the creation of the Information For All Programme, UNESCO tried to channel its activities related to the digital environment. This initiative, planned as an intersectorial programme, not only applied to the activities regarding the fields of mandate of the new CII Sector; instead, the programme was also supposed to cover activities related to digital technology and the Internet carried out by UNESCO's other programme sectors, responsible for education, culture, social and natural sciences. Accordingly, it can be viewed as the organisation's official structure dealing with the multiple changes caused by the increasing pervasiveness of digital technology and has, therefore, been described in this chapter as the official result of UNESCO's search for an institutional frame for its response to the information society.

As such, it was also part of the organisation's response to the various dimensions of technological convergence, which constituted the general context for the analysis of this second episode of UNESCO's policy discourse. Indeed, while many aspects of convergence were mirrored by changes on the technical or economic level, UNESCO's response to the phenomenon of convergence mostly concerned its consequences for the content and usages of communication and information. These consequences, as well as the political and regulatory problems they entailed, were thoroughly discussed in a number of UNESCO's world reports published during the 1990s. Despite the fact that these reports can be viewed as UNESCO's most important intellectual response to the phenomenon, they had surprisingly little impact on the organisation's actual policy-making, which was slowed down by the multiple and often competing concerns of the professional communities involved in UNESCO's activities related to information, communication and informatics as well as by the interests of its member states.

In order to analyse these interests and the difficulties they caused, this chapter retraced the performative dimension of the creation of a new intergovernmental programme on the information society, a process that started in 1998 with the joint decision of PGI's and IIP's intergovernmental bodies to dissolve their own programmes in favour of a new structure. It described the various steps of the drafting process, from the experts meetings in the context of an Ad-Hoc Working Group and a first general consultation process to the search for approval by UNESCO's member states during several sessions of the Executive Board and the General Conference and a second consultation process.

Summarising the steps on the basis of the players involved, the analysis of the performative dimension showed that, during this second episode, the most influential actors were the experts representing the various professional communities traditionally

involved in UNESCO's intergovernmental programmes for information and informatics. Indeed, they not only took the lead during the drafting process, thus succeeding in implementing many of their recommendations and demands regarding the objectives of the new programme; in addition, they were able to inscribe their role into the structure of the new programme through the creation of an intergovernmental expert council. Besides the professional experts, it was UNESCO's member states' community that contributed to fine-tuning the definitive documents of the programme; yet, it never questioned the experts' plan of foreseeing an intergovernmental council — no doubt because this also contributed to increasing the member states' community's own control over the concrete activities and the budget of the new structure. The least influential group of actors involved in IFAP's drafting was the staff of the CII Sector, in particular when compared to the important role they played in defining the debates and discourses during the INFOethics conferences. Although they took part in the expert meetings and coordinated the consultation process, all drafts were prepared and revised by the national experts represented in PGI's and IIP's bureaus, and never by the CII/INF Division, in charge of IFAP's creation, which only acted as a facilitator.

This distribution of roles was also reflected in the discursive elements scrutinised in the analysis of the episode's discursive dimension. Indeed, the actors who most distinctly marked the discourse inscribed into IFAP's definitive documents were the professional experts involved in PGI's and IIP's governing bodies. Representing different professional communities —archivists, librarians and information specialists for PGI and computer scientists for IIP— they all tried to ensure that the legacy of their work would be respected in the new programme. This was not simply due to pure conservatism and the ambition to protect the importance of their professional communities. Instead, all these communities held long-standing working relationships with UNESCO, often dating back to the period of the organisation's inception, which allowed them to officially advise the organisation on all matters concerning their fields of expertise.

Consequently, and despite insisting that the two existing programmes could not be merged but that a fresh start was needed, most involved actors endeavoured to inscribe PGI's and IIP's existing activities and the major professional concern of their communities into IFAP. As a result, its mandate, objectives and main areas of activities were marked by a number of dichotomies: between “old” and “new” information services, between “infostructure” and “infrastructure” and between an approach targeted at developing countries and a more normative approach. In the analysis of the discursive dimension, these dichotomies are all described as being part of a larger, overarching contradiction between a programme that mainly provides a practical assistance

programme and a more general programme that covers all aspects of the information society.

In general, during the episode of IFAP's creation, there was less discursive action than during the episode of the INFOethics conferences; in addition, the discursive exchanges were marked by less competition between different emblematic issues and storylines. However, they had more long-lasting consequences: by inscribing certain storylines and discursive elements into IFAP's definitive description, the involved actors fixed those storylines and discursive elements in the most stable way, as they would be part of UNESCO's institutional discourse for the entire validity period of IFAP's mandate. Hence, the actors contributed to the institutionalisation of the discourse compounded by the different elements and storylines.

In the final analysis, this discourse was characterised by three key propositions, concerning three different levels:

- Firstly, concerning the *level of professional information services*, the institutionalised discourse expressed a vision of an information society in which not only was the access to digital information a major political and societal concern but in which the traditional institutions in charge of providing, storing and managing the physical carriers of information still had an important role to play.
- Secondly, concerning the *structural level*, the discourse was characterised by the belief that the simple access to information through digital technology and traditional services was not enough to justify the denomination “information society”. Instead, by regulating the structural conditions with information policies and by providing free access to the public domain, public institutions needed to make sure that the content of the accessible information was of high quality and was relevant to the (local) needs of their citizens.
- Thirdly, concerning the *individual and societal levels*, the institutionalised policy discourse expressed the idea that, in order to enable all users in all countries to benefit from the advantages of the new digital era, individuals needed to be empowered —thanks to information literacy and capacity building— to make use of the accessible information and to translate it successfully into knowledge. In addition, solutions needed to be found for the ethical and societal challenges triggered by the changing role of information and technology; only that way could information societies contribute to both the individual and collective well-being of users.

Despite the successful inscriptions of a large range of concerns into IFAP and the smooth launch of the programme in January 2001, the process of its creation was often criticised.

One of the most interesting criticisms voiced was that UNESCO would spend too much time on defining its priorities with regard to the digital environment rather than on actively dealing with its consequences:

“UNESCO must re-focus its energies and priorities. While rationalising the communications and information programs partially achieves this, the focus is inward looking and does little to translate to useful results for member states and the communities they serve. It is easy for resources to be diverted to this inward looking re-focusing of priorities. It is more difficult for UNESCO to [...] ensure that a substantial proportion is used in the delivery of tangible and sustainable activities in member states, both at the national and regional levels.”<sup>298</sup>

While IFAP’s long and sometimes contentious drafting process certainly gave validity to this complaint, it was even more justified by UNESCO’s efforts to adopt an international instrument summarising its approach to the information society. This even more contentious process took the organisation a full six years and nearly resulted in the failure of its overall strategy with regard to access to information.

### **3. Universal access as a question of diversity: UNESCO’s search for a global consensus on the information society**

*“I made it clear, here and there, both abroad and also here at the General Conference, that if we were to adopt a new recommendation on cyberspace, a very important recommendation, we should do so by consensus [...]. I therefore appealed to all of you, both abroad and here, to make further efforts to reach a consensus.”<sup>299</sup>*

The third and last episode of UNESCO’s policy response to the information society concerns a policy process that started during UNESCO’s 29<sup>th</sup> General Conference in 1997 and cumulated six years later in the adoption of a recommendation during the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference in 2003. This “Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace” was part of the organisation’s

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<sup>298</sup> Gareth Grainger, comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> general consultation about IFAP, 1 February 2000 (Web archive “IFAP consultation”).

<sup>299</sup> Comment by the Director-General of UNESCO during the 31<sup>st</sup> session of the General Conference in 2001, see UNESCO, “Records of the General Conference”, 31 C/Proceedings, November 2001, 589 (UNESDOC).

overarching strategy to formulate a convincing policy discourse on the information society and on access to information in the digital age that all its member states could agree on. Therefore, this episode can be described as UNESCO's search for a global consensus on the information society, which, within UNESCO, was often referred to as "cyberspace" in order to mark the difference to a technology-focused idea of a society and economy based on information. Moreover, this last episode analysed in this thesis can also be seen as the culmination and complementation of the first two episodes. After the search for ideas and values during the INFOethics conferences and the attempt to institutionalise some of them through the creation of IFAP, this episode represented the effort to inscribe these ideas and values into an international legal instrument in order to fix the achieved consensus in a stable way.

However, this search for consensus was not an easy undertaking because not all member states of UNESCO and decision-makers within the organisation consented to the necessity of such an instrument; in addition, it was also the content of the instrument itself and, in particular, the formulation of the measures it proposed that caused distress to many governments. Three main reasons can be found to explain the controversies around the preparation of the recommendation:

- First of all, the issues dealt with by the recommendation were exceptionally contentious as they touched upon ethical questions that are culturally interpreted in different ways, and on important economic interests, like the adaptation of Intellectual Property Rights to the digital environment.
- Secondly, the proposal of an international instrument on these issues, as well as all initial drafts of the recommendation, originated from UNESCO's Division for Information and Informatics and were strongly influenced by Philippe Quéau's ideas which were highly contested amongst many of UNESCO's Western member states.
- And thirdly, it was the diplomatic context of the period under scrutiny that paved the way to a particularly thorny international consensus as the drafting process was subordinated to UNESCO's political priority in these years, namely the return of the United States to the organisation, which eventually occurred in 2003.

Besides the intense debates accompanying the preparation of the recommendation, this third episode is also interesting in relation to our subject for a different reason, as it added an interesting twist to the debate on the information society. In order to overcome the difficulties and controversies encountered during the early preparation phase of the recommendation, UNESCO coupled the contentious issues of universal access and the

public good with the question of cultural diversity, which was equally of high priority at this time. Thanks to the goal of promoting linguistic diversity in cyberspace being integrated into the recommendation's objective, the recommendation was able to benefit from UNESCO's member states' broader consent on this issue.

Since this *context* of UNESCO's discussion on diversity had not been part of the discourse and processes analysed in the first two episodes, this third empirical chapter starts by introducing the general policy debate on cultural diversity, its development within UNESCO, and its integration into the organisation's discourse on the information society. The second part of the chapter moves on to the *description of the performative dimension* of this episode; it retraces in detail the recommendation's difficult and conflictual preparation and negotiation process, including the thematic, political and ideological struggles between UNESCO, its member states and observer organisations.

The last part of the chapter finally focuses on the *scrutiny of the discursive dimension* of this episode by providing an in-depth analysis of the four different sections of the recommendation, the ideas included in the first drafts proposed by the Secretariat, and the discourse eventually inscribed in the final text. The overarching goal of the chapter is to retrace *how* UNESCO tried to inscribe the ethical values and positions developed during the previous episodes into a legal non-binding instrument.

### **3.1 Understanding the context: Diversity as a new paradigm**

In order to understand the dynamics leading towards the adoption of a recommendation on universal access and the contentious exchanges that took place during its preparation process, it is necessary to look at the wider international and institutional context in which UNESCO underwent this effort. Therefore, this contextual sub-chapter focuses on a policy debate that played a very prominent role within UNESCO during the same period and had a strong influence on the content and focus of the recommendation: the policy debate about cultural diversity. Initially discussed outside of UNESCO, the topic of the promotion and protection of cultural diversity was introduced to the organisation in the second half of the 1990s and quickly evolved into a key policy issue. As such, it was discussed in all governing bodies' sessions and eventually culminated in a non-binding declaration on cultural diversity in 2001, followed by a legally binding convention in 2005. Touching on a similar set of problems as the debate on the ethical, social and cultural consequences of digital technology, the question of protecting and promoting diversity



was also discussed in the realm of information and communication, where it led to a shift in the general discourse and is, therefore, of particular relevance for our topic.

For a better understanding of the debate about cultural diversity and its importance for UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society, the sub-chapter first briefly introduces the general policy issue of cultural diversity. It then provides some more background to the discourse on diversity within UNESCO, before discussing, in its last part, how it influenced the debates on the impact of digital information and communication technologies. With UNESCO's work on cultural diversity being a subject that attracted much scholarly attention, the aim of this sub-chapter is not to give another detailed account of the debates and the related international instruments.<sup>300</sup> Rather, it only highlights those contextual aspects that are relevant for the subject under scrutiny in this thesis, UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society. For the same reason, the first and second part of this sub-chapter mainly rely on secondary literature and official UNESCO documents, which allow for the most important contextual aspects to be presented. The third part, discussing the relevance of the cultural diversity debate to the episode under consideration in this chapter, represents a more fundamental contribution to the empirical and historical research about UNESCO as it is based on document and archive analysis. It, therefore, also links the introduction of the general context with the descriptions of the performative and discursive dimensions of this third episode, which follow in the remainder of the chapter.

### **General context: The policy debate on 'cultural exception' and 'cultural diversity'**

The origins of the policy debate on cultural diversity are usually situated in the processes of economic globalisation and the emergence of enforceable multilateral trade rules,

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<sup>300</sup> It would be impossible to give an exhaustive list of the literature about cultural diversity and UNESCO. Some detailed introductions are provided by Mira Burri-Nenova, "The Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity at the International Level", NCCR Trade Working Paper (April 2009); Divina Frau-Meigs, "La convention sur la diversité culturelle : Un instrument obsolète pour une réalité en expansion?", *Annuaire français de relations internationales* 8 (2007): 345-56; C. B. Graber, "The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity: A Counterbalance to the WTO?", *Journal of International Economic Law* 9, no. 3 (8 August 2006): 553-74; Rostam J. Neuwirth, "United in Divergency: A Commentary on the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions", *Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht* 66 (2006): 819-62; Nina Obuljen and Joost Smiers, *UNESCO's Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Making It Work* (Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 2006); Phillip Rousseau, "Les cultures fragiles. L'UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)"; Rachael Craufurd Smith, "The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Building a New World Information and Communication Order?", *International Journal of Communication* 1, no. 1 (2007): 31.

taking place during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>301</sup> More precisely, most scholars see the root of the debate in the negotiation processes that culminated, in 1995, in the inception of the World Trade Organisation as an organisation in charge of supervising and liberalising trade.<sup>302</sup> In 1993, at the close of the process known as “Uruguay Round” (1986-1994), the question of progressively liberalising the trade of audiovisual and cultural services and goods became a stumbling block in the negotiation, resulting in serious power struggles between contradictory interests. While some governments that were unreservedly in favour of free trade —first and foremost the United States— advocated for abandoning all barriers for cultural products, others —led by France and Canada— pressed for the maintenance of national industries, yet without hermetically closing all borders to this kind of product.<sup>303</sup> The position of the latter was motivated by the fear that, by extending the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to cultural and audiovisual goods, their unique status would be weakened in favour of their commercial characteristics.

Claiming that “la culture n’est pas une marchandise comme les autres”, France introduced the political concept of “cultural exception” (*exception culturelle*) to underline the specificity of cultural goods and to oppose the perception that cinema, television, music and other audiovisual services are simply entertainment industries without any additional value. Although the “cultural exception” concept quickly developed into a very effective political buzzword, its connotation and aim was often disputed. On the one hand, proponents used it to argue that culture should not be a subject of free trade and that the global market for cultural goods was actually dominated by a small number of multinational companies led by the United States.<sup>304</sup> On the other hand, the concept was opposed by others as “disguised protectionism” that simply served to justify subventions of national cultural production and to defend protectionist measures restricting the diffusion of

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<sup>301</sup> Burri-Nenova, “The Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity at the International Level”, 5.

<sup>302</sup> Rousseau, “Les cultures fragiles. L’UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)”, 48. The WTO was officially founded in 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), initiated in 1948. Most of its tasks and policy areas stem from previous trade negotiation (most prominently the Uruguay Round, 1986-1994) and mainly consist in providing a framework for negotiating trade agreements and facilitating dispute resolution processes.

<sup>303</sup> Divina Frau-Meigs, “Le retour des Etats-Unis à l’UNESCO”, 868f. For the history of the special status of audiovisual goods in trade agreements see also Rousseau, “Les cultures fragiles. L’UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)”, 48ff.

<sup>304</sup> Frau-Meigs, “Le retour des Etats-Unis à l’UNESCO”, 869. For more background information on the debate about the concept of “cultural exception”, see Divina Frau-Meigs, “Exception culturelle, politiques nationales et mondialisation: Enjeux de démocratisation et de promotion du contemporain”, *Quaderns* 14, Publication du Conseil de l’Audiovisuel de Catalogne (2002): 3-17.

foreign artistic work.<sup>305</sup> The situation was further complicated by the fact that most governments advocating for free trade exemptions for cultural goods were not generally against market liberalisation but rather encouraged it for most other economic sectors aside from the cultural sector. This diluted the frequently produced argument that the paradigm of “cultural exception” was a tool to counterbalance the GATT’s and WTO’s institutionalisation of economic regulation with non-commercial objectives.<sup>306</sup>

Due to these insurmountable differences, the debate on cultural and audiovisual products did not lead to any satisfying result for any of the involved parties. Thereupon, France and Canada —the two countries most disappointed with the outcome of the Uruguay Round— started to reflect on possible ways for the contentious topic of cultural goods trading to be extracted from the WTO and tackled in different fora.

In 1998, the Canadian government initiated an informal forum to discuss the arising challenges related to cultural policies in view of free trade and market liberalisation.<sup>307</sup> From these annual meetings emerged the International Network of Cultural Policies (INCP), a diplomatic coalition composed, at the time, of about 50 member states bringing together their responsible ministers to discuss strategies on how to protect national sovereignty in the field of culture. The plan soon emerged for a first step to be taken in the right direction in the form of an international instrument on the matter and for UNESCO to serve as the ideal place for developing such an alternative international agreement, as it would counterbalance the treaties made under the auspices of WTO.<sup>308</sup> This idea was not only promoted on the governmental level but also by several civil society coalitions, mainly composed of professional associations from the field of culture. Their main objective was to raise awareness, among professionals and the international community, of the problems deriving from the possible extension of free trade agreements to the cultural sphere. As UNESCO is an international organisation that has always had strong ties with the professional communities related to its fields of mandates, it seemed a natural forum for continuing this campaign. Yet, the interesting aspect of the new governmental and civil society coalitions and awareness strategies was that they left behind the discourse based on the concept of “cultural exception”. Instead, a new key

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<sup>305</sup> Graber, “The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity”, 554.

<sup>306</sup> Mira Burri, “The UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity: An Appraisal Five Years after Its Entry into Force”, NCCR Trade Working Paper (February 2013), 2.

<sup>307</sup> Prior to this, the issue had been discussed between members of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), where the deliberations about the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI, 1995-1998) amounted to the same power struggles encountered during the GATT negotiations. For more details about the policy debate on cultural exceptions in the MAI negotiations, see Rousseau, “Les cultures fragiles. L’UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)”, 56ff.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

concept took a centre stage position, which had not, until this moment, been linked to the debate about free trade and cultural goods, namely the concept of “cultural diversity”.<sup>309</sup>

There is a general consensus among scholars that the switch from “cultural exception” to “cultural diversity” was not only a simple change of vocabulary but also a more substantial change of the underlying narrative. The discursive shift placed the problem of cultural exception in a larger complex of problems that went beyond the restricted questions of trade, market and services. As a matter of fact, the criticism had often been made that the claim for cultural exceptions seemed to simply reflect the interests of a small number of economically strong countries that tried to extract their cultural sector from international trade agreements; it was thus often perceived as having a negative and latent “anti-American” connotation.<sup>310</sup> In contrast, the new key term of “cultural diversity” was considered to be conceptually more neutral: “Diversity in audiovisual trade is something that can be analysed statistically — free from ideology and protectionist ulterior motives.”<sup>311</sup>

Moreover, going beyond trade concerns, the new concept also implied structural considerations that were entirely absent from the concept of “cultural exception”, such as sustainable development, human rights, social justice and intercultural dialogue.<sup>312</sup> This becomes apparent when looking at the multiple definitions of the term “cultural diversity”, which —just like for the concept of “cultural exception”— imply different meanings and nuances depending on the context in which the term is used. In general, it is useful to distinguish two main approaches in understanding cultural diversity:<sup>313</sup>

On the one hand, the concept can refer to *diversity among countries, society and cultures*, which can be maintained through a balanced exchange of cultural goods and services and the intervention of governments for promoting local production and restricting the dominance of foreign cultural goods. This understanding is the one most closely linked to the policy debates about cultural exceptions and free trade.

On the other hand, —and this was the new aspect— the concept can also refer to *diversity within societies* that are composed of individuals with “multiple identities and heterogeneous

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<sup>309</sup> Graber, “The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity”, 555.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.; Rousseau, “Les cultures fragiles. L’UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)”, 77.

<sup>311</sup> Graber, “The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity”, 555.

<sup>312</sup> Neuwirth, “United in Divergency”, 833.

<sup>313</sup> This distinction is taken over from Nina Obuljen, “From Our Creative Diversity to the Convention on Cultural Diversity: Introduction to the Debate”, in *UNESCO’s Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions: Making It Work*, ed. Nina Obuljen and Joost Smiers (Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 2006), 19-35.

cultural characteristics that together eventually build a national or other form of identity”.<sup>314</sup> In order to promote this kind of diversity, fundamental human rights need to be protected, democracy enhanced and equal participation of minorities and indigenous peoples guaranteed. This understanding of diversity is, thus, linked to a significantly larger set of political questions than the first one.<sup>315</sup>

The distinction is interesting for our subject as it helps to understand why the debates were brought to UNESCO with the goal of adopting an intergovernmental instrument on the subject. In fact, whereas trade aspects are not a major concern for the organisation, it is the second understanding of cultural diversity that was at the heart of UNESCO’s mandate. To shed more light on UNESCO’s position in the general policy debate about cultural diversity, the next part of this sub-chapter describes how the debate continued to develop within UNESCO, before discussing, in the last part, the extent to which this is relevant for our subject.

### **Institutional context: UNESCO and cultural diversity**

It appears that the roots of the policy debate on cultural diversity cannot be found within UNESCO but were only brought into the organisation in the late 1990s, when several member states sought a new forum for developing an international instrument on the matter. But the underlying complex of problems was not a new issue for UNESCO, which had been dealing with questions of culture, development, globalisation and pluralism for a long time.<sup>316</sup>

Without going into detail about the history of UNESCO’s work on these issues, it is possible to state that UNESCO’s interest in the cultural dimension of development reached a first peak when, in 1986, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-1997) under the joint auspices of UNESCO and the UN. In response to this initiative, in 1991, UNESCO’s General Conference created a World Commission for Culture and Development which was to prepare a world report

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>315</sup> This understanding of “diversity with societies” was mainly promoted by Canada and Catalonia, but less by France, which preferred to emphasise the idea of “diversity among cultures” and did not want to recognise the regional diversity within national borders (Divina Frau-Meigs, Email interview, 6 August 2015).

<sup>316</sup> Katérina Stenou, former director of UNESCO’s Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, gives a chronological overview of UNESCO’s discourse on culture and cultural pluralism since 1946 (Katérina Stenou, UNESCO and the Issue of Cultural Diversity: Review and Strategy, 1946–2007 [Paris: UNESCO, 2000]). See also Roger-Pol Droit, *Humanity in the Making. Overview of the Intellectual History of UNESCO 1945-2005* (Paris: UNESCO, 2005), 169ff.

on the subject.<sup>317</sup> After two years of work, in 1995, the Commission —headed by former UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and composed of fourteen members from all over the world— published the key report “Our Creative Diversity”, which was also important for UNESCO’s activities in the field of communication.<sup>318</sup>

Indeed, the report attracted wide attention as it highlighted two important cultural challenges deriving from the progressive globalisation: First, it introduced the idea that diversity and pluralism in the field of culture was a global public good whose promotion was of utmost importance and a precondition for the proper functioning of democratic societies. Secondly, it underlined the imminent homogenisation of traditional cultures stemming from an increasingly globalised media and communication landscape.<sup>319</sup> Moreover, the report reflected a new approach to cultural policies, focusing on the promotion of creative potentials and their role for sustainable development.<sup>320</sup>

In order to decide on a concrete follow-up on the report, UNESCO held an Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in Stockholm in 1998 — the same year that some UNESCO member states had hoped to organise a World Conference on Communication and Development, which never took place, however. UNESCO itself called the Stockholm conference a historical turning point as it represented the first official intergovernmental acknowledgment of the necessity to protect cultural identity and diversity.<sup>321</sup>

Following the event, UNESCO’s work on cultural diversity picked up steam. France and Canada saw the opportunity to achieve their goal of an international instrument on culture and trade; in cooperation with UNESCO, in 1999 and 2000, they organised two round tables for Ministers for Culture about cultural diversity in times of globalisation and liberalised markets. In addition, in 2000, upon the same two countries’ proposal, UNESCO created an experts committee on the matter. Its work culminated in the unanimous adoption of a Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity during UNESCO’s

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<sup>317</sup> UNESCO, “World Report on Culture and Development”, 26 C/Resolutions, Resolution 3.4 adopted on 6 November 1991 (UNESDOC).

<sup>318</sup> UNESCO, *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 1995). Amongst the additional six “Honorary Members” of the commission were, for example, Claude Lévi-Strauss (France), Aung San Suu Kyi (Myanmar) and Elie Wiesel (United States).

<sup>319</sup> Graber, “The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity”, 557.

<sup>320</sup> Some scholars even consider that the report played “a fundamental role in changing the perception of the role of culture in our societies” and was, therefore, “certainly one of the most important benchmarks in building the international movement for cultural diversity” (Obuljen, “From Our Creative Diversity to the Convention on Cultural Diversity: Introduction to the Debate”, 25).

<sup>321</sup> Rousseau, “Les cultures fragiles. L’UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)”, 75.

General Conference in November 2001, and thus only a few weeks after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 — an unusual historical context, which brought the declaration much greater attention than a non-binding instrument of UNESCO would usually receive.<sup>322</sup> Besides this, the declaration's uncontested adoption is interesting for the episode under scrutiny in this chapter since the first draft of UNESCO's recommendation on universal access to cyberspace, through which the organisation tried to institutionalise part of its discourse on the information society, miserably failed to reach consensus during the same General Conference. The complex reasons why the international community was willing to support one instrument but not the other will be further explored in the analysis of the performative dimension in the next sub-chapter.

To prepare the understanding of these reasons, it is necessary to continue retracing the success story of the “cultural diversity” concept within UNESCO. As a declaration is a non-binding instrument, it was only perceived as a first step towards a legally binding agreement. At the end of 2003, upon the request of INCP and based on a preliminary study<sup>323</sup>, UNESCO's General Conference decided to elaborate a draft for a convention on the protection of cultural diversity.<sup>324</sup> The preparation process was strongly supported by civil society coalitions and resulted in the adoption of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions during the following session of UNESCO's General Conference in October 2005, with a majority of 148 member states and only two dissenting votes, by the United States and Israel.<sup>325</sup> The convention entered into force only two years later, following its ratification by the minimum number of 30 member states – a process which became known as the swiftest ratification process in the history of UNESCO.

But despite the fast process and the unconfined support by a large number of governments, the preparation process of the declaration had not been without contentions. Just like during the negotiations on cultural exceptions in the context of

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<sup>322</sup> Among other elements, the declaration lists twelve principles to be respected in the context of cultural diversity, e.g. Article 6 with particular relevance for our subject: “Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity”. For the full text of the declaration, see UNESCO, “UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity”, CLT-2002/WS/9, 2002 (UNESDOC).

<sup>323</sup> UNESCO, “Preliminary Study on the Technical and Legal Aspects Relating to the Desirability of a Standard-Setting Instrument on Cultural Diversity”, 166 EX/28, 12 March 2003 (UNESDOC).

<sup>324</sup> UNESCO, “Desirability of drawing up an international standard-setting instrument on cultural diversity”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 34 adopted on 17 October 2003 (UNESDOC); see also Graber, “The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity”, 558.

<sup>325</sup> Four countries (Australia, Honduras, Nicaragua and Liberia) abstained from the vote.

GATT and WTO, this time the strongest scepticism and resistance also came from the side of the United States, which opposed the convention as an instrument of protectionism violating the fundamental rights to free expression and information.<sup>326</sup> In fact, these were the same arguments it also used against the adoption of UNESCO's recommendation on universal access to cyberspace. But the US opposition to the 2005 convention on cultural diversity was so evident that some observers saw in it one of the most powerful reasons for the United States to have re-joined UNESCO in 2003, after nearly two decades of absence: only with an official status as a member state was the United States able to either prevent the instrument's adoption or, at least, to mitigate its postulations significantly in order to protect its national interests.<sup>327</sup>

In contrast to the US opposition, the majority of UNESCO's member states welcomed the convention's overarching objectives not only to promote and protect cultural diversity but also to ensure that international trade rules do not counteract these efforts and "to assist developing countries [...] to preserve and fully exploit their cultural heritage".<sup>328</sup> Yet, despite its legally binding nature, the text of the convention formulated these objectives more as stimuli than as clear obligations. For this reason, the criticism was often made that the convention was never meant actually to entail any innovative provisions for the protection of cultural diversity.<sup>329</sup> Instead, as the historical development from "cultural exception" to "cultural diversity" showed, it can also be considered a result of some countries' efforts to promote political endorsement of culturally motivated trade restrictions.<sup>330</sup> This was also highlighted by the direct juxtaposition of the terms "protection" and "promotion" in the name of the convention, which at first sight might appear contradictory. This represented, however, an attempt to placate the United States, which vigorously objected to the idea of "protection".<sup>331</sup> Thus,

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 5ff; Graber, "The New UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity", 560. See also the quote of the US ambassador to UNESCO explaining the negative vote with the concern that it could be "misinterpreted, hindering the free flow of ideas by word and image and also affecting other areas, notably trade", as cited by Neuwirth, "United in Divergency", 850.

<sup>327</sup> Neuwirth, "United in Divergency", 849; see also Frau-Meigs, "Le retour des Etats-Unis à l'UNESCO", 877.

<sup>328</sup> Smith, "The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions", 27.

<sup>329</sup> For a detailed criticism and analysis of the convention's text and impact see Burri, "The UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity: An Appraisal Five Years after Its Entry into Force"; Burri-Nenova, "The Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity at the International Level".

<sup>330</sup> Smith, "The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions", 53.

<sup>331</sup> Frau-Meigs, Email interview. The term "protection" was one of the most contested aspects of the convention text during the UNESCO debates on the topic as it was opposed by the United States and their allies, including Japan. Until the last moment, the US government objected to the term with more



the juxtaposition of the two terms was to express the two-sided goal of the instrument consisting, on the one hand, in the *protection* of cultural goods from commercial interests and, on the other hand, in the *promotion* of cultural goods and expressions through the new opportunities offered by globalisation and economic, social and technological progress.<sup>332</sup>

### **Thematic context: Diversity and multilingualism in cyberspace**

For UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society and the episode under scrutiny in this chapter —the elaboration of a recommendation on cyberspace— UNESCO's work concerning cultural diversity is of relevance and interest for three main reasons:

First, regarding the political level, the policy debate on cultural diversity tackled the same complex of fundamental problems as the policy debate on the ethical and societal questions of the information society. Both were a response to the challenges and threats posed by economic and political globalisation processes and commercial interests. Hence, they shared the common objective of finding policy solutions for countering the deteriorating imbalances between countries and peoples benefitting from these processes and those whose situation they aggravated. Accordingly, both policy discourses —the one on cultural diversity and the one on the ethical questions of the information society— centred on the key argument that, in times of globalisation, it was of utmost importance for the international community to promote and protect the global public goods. In one case, the global public good in need of defence was culture and the diversity of cultural expressions; in the other, it was information and the quality of (public domain) content and the access to it.<sup>333</sup>

Not least for this reason, the campaign for cultural diversity was often viewed as a continuation of the movement for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), which, during the 1970s and early 80s, had equally chosen UNESCO as the

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than 100 amendments. For more details, see Frau-Meigs, “La convention sur la diversité culturelle: Un instrument obsolète pour une réalité en expansion?”, 897f.

<sup>332</sup> Neuwirth, ““United in Divergency””, 831; Rousseau, “Les cultures fragiles. L’UNESCO et la diversité culturelle (2001-2007)”, 77.

<sup>333</sup> It is interesting to note that some of the actors involved in the policy debate on cultural diversity also intervened in UNESCO's debate on the information society, while the main driving force behind the ethical approach to the information society —CII/INF director Philippe Quéau— did not engage in the preparation process of the legal instruments on cultural diversity.

main forum for its fight against global imbalances and the effects of global commerce.<sup>334</sup> And indeed, the two movements can be seen as related since they both criticised the overrepresentation and dominance of certain countries, most notably the United States, in the sphere of culture and communication — a criticism which was equally at the heart of UNESCO’s policy debates on the ethical and societal challenges of the information society. As a consequence, all three movements are additionally linked by the blunt objection they were met with by those governments and actors who considered the claims for more equality as threats to their national interests.

Secondly, with regard to the institutional level, the policy debates on cultural diversity and on the information society followed a similar trajectory as they started around the same time and both culminated in the adoption of international instruments. However, despite taking place in parallel, the policy processes of preparing and negotiating the instruments’ texts were very different. The declaration and convention on cultural diversity found great support among UNESCO’s member states and, despite the lack of support by the United States, were adopted and ratified without encountering any major obstacles or deferrals. Unlike this smooth process, the preparation of the recommendation on cyberspace was rather difficult. Its juxtaposition with the policy debate on cultural diversity allows for contextualising the problems encountered and for better comprehending the power struggles among UNESCO’s member states in terms of subjects of globalisation and commerce.

Thirdly, concerning the thematic level, the concept of cultural diversity is particularly relevant for our subject because it spilled over from UNESCO’s Culture Sector to the Sector for Information and Communication, where it substantially influenced the debate on access to information. In fact, it triggered a new focus on linguistic diversity and multilingualism in cyberspace that was seen more and more as a pre-condition for fair and equal access to Internet content. As a result of this, the successful concept was taken over and integrated in the policy discourse on the information society in order to underline the claims for more diversified and qualitative information. As part of this integration, the concept of “cultural diversity” was also carried over to the debates taking place in the

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<sup>334</sup> Divina Frau-Meigs, “Cultural Diversity and Global Media Studies”, *Global Media and Communication* 3, no. 3 (December 2007): 260-66; Obuljen, “From Our Creative Diversity to the Convention on Cultural Diversity: Introduction to the Debate”, 19; Smith, “The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.”

context of the World Summit on the Information Society.<sup>335</sup> In order to understand the importance of this addition, it is necessary to have a closer look at the development of the discourse on multilingualism in cyberspace.

The aspect of linguistic diversity had always been part of the claims that led to the introduction of arguments about cultural exception and cultural diversity in international negotiations about free trade and cultural goods and service. As such, it was a particular concern of the French and Québec governments and the civil society groups which were among the most vehement advocators for an intergovernmental instrument once the debate reached UNESCO. In addition, since it was fully in line with the organisation's mandate of increasing knowledge, exchanging information and fostering equal opportunities for education, it is not further surprising that UNESCO paid particular regard to the diversity of linguistic expressions. Thus, already the 2001 declaration on cultural diversity set out a framework for the international community to tackle the problem of multilingualism. It called for member states to take appropriate measures for "safeguarding linguistic heritage of humanity", "encouraging linguistic diversity [...] at all levels of education" and "promoting linguistic diversity in cyberspace and encouraging universal access to the global network to all information in the public domain".<sup>336</sup>

The last action point is not only a direct reference to the policy debate on universal access that was taking place in parallel within the INFOethics conferences and UNESCO's work on the information society. It was also based on the idea that "[l]anguage [was] the medium through which all information society exchanges occur [...] [and] a fundamental medium for all communication, the basis by which individuals and communities express themselves whether in oral tradition or in written text."<sup>337</sup> Although this understanding of the role of language for communication and the information society was consistent with the general discourse on the diversity of cultural expressions, it is, however, quite an articulate departure from the understanding underlying UNESCO's constitution: while the aim here was to remove obstacles to communication between cultures in order to share and exchange ideas, the focus was now on the maintenance of separate identities

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<sup>335</sup> Frau-Meigs, Email interview. The final outcome document of the second WSIS phase in 2005 listed cultural and linguistic diversity as one of the eleven Action Lines and placed on UNESCO the responsibility for its implementation.

<sup>336</sup> UNESCO, "UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity", CLT-2002/WS/9, 2002 (UNESDOC). The Convention adopted in 2005 is less explicit as it only refers once to linguistic diversity and recognises it as "fundamental element of cultural diversity" (for the full text of the convention see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/cultural-diversity/diversity-of-cultural-expressions/the-convention/convention-text/> (last accessed 30 January 2015).

<sup>337</sup> John Paolilio et al., *Measuring Linguistic Diversity on the Internet* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2005), 6.

and on countering the mounting homogenisation of language and culture, which was considered a result of globalisation.<sup>338</sup>

The altered perspective on language and its role for communication and information was not only expressed in the legal instruments on cultural diversity. Already prior to their adoption, UNESCO was involved in research and awareness campaigns on multilingualism. In fact, already in preparation for the Pérez de Cuéllar report “Our creative diversity” of 1995, a report on “endangered languages of the world” predicted that about 90% of all spoken languages would disappear before the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>339</sup>

Following up on the subject, in December 1997, UNESCO’s Information and Informatics Division organised an international symposium about Multilingualism in the Information Society, in cooperation with the *Forum International des Sciences Humaines* and with the support of the European Union and the French government. It was followed by an expert meeting in April 1998, which mainly served to explore possible policy solutions for the homogenisation and disappearance of languages accelerated by new digital information technologies. The same subject was also discussed in the context of the INFOethics conferences and the preparation of the Information For All Programme. In addition, in March 2001, the French commission for UNESCO, in cooperation with UNESCO and the *Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie*, organised a colloquium dedicated to the issue of language diversity in the “electronic networks”, during which experts tried to assess the effects of ICTs on language presence and to define appropriate means for promoting linguistic diversity through media and information literacy.<sup>340</sup>

But UNESCO’s most notable effort with regards to language diversity in the time of digitalisation was certainly the Initiative B@bel, which was launched by CII in 1999, an intersectorial effort in cooperation with the Education Sector and the Culture Sector.<sup>341</sup> It

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<sup>338</sup> Droit, *Humanity in the Making*, 169.

<sup>339</sup> On its current website, UNESCO quotes estimations that about 50% of the more than 6000 spoken languages will disappear by the end of this century. The organisation also offers an online atlas on endangered languages and follows up on the disappearance of known languages and dialects: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/> (last accessed 30 January 2015).

<sup>340</sup> The working documents and email correspondence about these events are part of the archival records of the CII Sector (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The interrelation of media and information literacy and the promotion of linguistic diversity is today institutionalised through UNESCO’s “MILID network”, an international university network on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue.

<sup>341</sup> This new initiative in support of linguistic and cultural diversity was proposed during UNESCO’s 30<sup>th</sup> General Conference in autumn 1999, see UNESCO, “Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 30 C/31, 16 August 1999, § 14 (UNESDOC); and

was designed to encourage the formulation of guiding principles and policies, the implementation of projects for the improvement of online access to different languages, and the dissemination of best practices. In addition, on a more practical level, it was supposed to undertake a number of concrete actions to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity on and via the Internet.<sup>342</sup>

In contrast to the other projects on multilingualism in cyberspace, which mainly promoted cultural diversity as an end in itself, the interesting aspect of the Initiative B@bel was its close link to the other elements in UNESCO's discourse on the information society. Thus, it was explicitly designed as a facilitator contributing to the overarching goals consisting in the access to information and the public domain:

“The strategy for Initiative B@bel is presented as one of the basic elements in support of the concept of universal access to information in the emerging Information Society, which is a wider issue including many other elements (e.g. access to information in the public and private domains and associate basic rights to freedom of expression and privacy, access to technologies).”<sup>343</sup>

As a more neutral element than many of the other claims related to the conceptualisation of information as a global public good, the aspect of linguistic diversity was soon described as a precondition for universal access and the diffusion of public domain information:

“Hence, UNESCO's approach is to protect the interest of the majority by promoting the *universal multilingual diffusion of the global public domain of knowledge and the global information commons* through networks such as the Internet. Not only is this strategic approach respecting the spirit of the Constitution and the General Conference resolutions but it also confirms that UNESCO must take a leading initiative in it. *Public domain information is a global public good; without active public support there will be under-provision of this good.* With this in mind, UNESCO's main goal consists in *redefining universal access to information in all languages in cyberspace* [emphasis added].”<sup>344</sup>

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UNESCO, “Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 30 C/Resolutions, Resolution 37 adopted on 17 November 1999 (UNESDOC).

<sup>342</sup> For a concrete list of activities and project to be undertaken within the context of the Initiative B@bel, see also UNESCO, “List of the first projects to be undertaken in the framework of the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 159 EX/15, 16 March 2000.

<sup>343</sup> Victor Montviloff, “Briefing for the Director-General, 31<sup>st</sup> session of the General Conference, Commission V, on the Progress report on the draft recommendation to Member States on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, Memo, CI/INF/MONT/01/176, 17 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>344</sup> UNESCO, “Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 30 C/31, 16 August 1999, 2 (UNESDOC).

With regard to UNESCO's search for a global consensus on the topic of universal access, the focus on multilingualism in cyberspace can be interpreted as a new paradigm that helped to overcome the contentions encountered during the preparation process of a recommendation on the topic and to avoid its frontal opposition by the US government.<sup>345</sup> In addition, it triggered the interest and support of many developing countries, to which the problem of linguistic representation on cyberspace appeared much more relevant than the abstract discourse on information as a global good; hence, they were more inclined to support the preparation of a recommendation on multilingualism and universal access. This preparation process, the political problems encountered and the role of the new paradigm on multilingualism in the debates on universal access are described in the following analysis of the performative and discursive dimension of this third episode of UNESCO's response to the information society.

In conclusion, it is possible to state that the political concept of "cultural diversity" — brought to UNESCO as a continuation of the debate on "cultural exception"— developed into a policy discourse that was surprisingly successful both inside and outside the organisation. This was due to the strong diplomatic and civil society coalitions around it, which was initially led by the French and Canadian governments but rapidly passed on to other countries and regions like Sweden, India, Chile, Korea, which had a particular interest in finding policy agreements with respect to trade exemptions for cultural goods and services.<sup>346</sup> Developing around the dichotomy of "promotion and protection", the discourse on cultural diversity soon also spilled over to other on-going policy debates, most notably the discussions on ethical and societal consequences of the information society and the access to information in times of globalisation and digitalisation.<sup>347</sup> There, multilingualism and diversity in the Internet were declared to be a pre-condition for most other claims related to cyberspace, in particular the free and equal access to information and the public domain.

The following figure illustrates the development of the policy debate on cultural diversity, which constitutes an important contextual element for the understanding of the third episode of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society:

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<sup>345</sup> Frau-Meigs, Email interview.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> The debate on cultural diversity in relation to access to information was also taken up during the debates of the World Summit on the Information Society, where it was promoted in particular by indigenous groups.

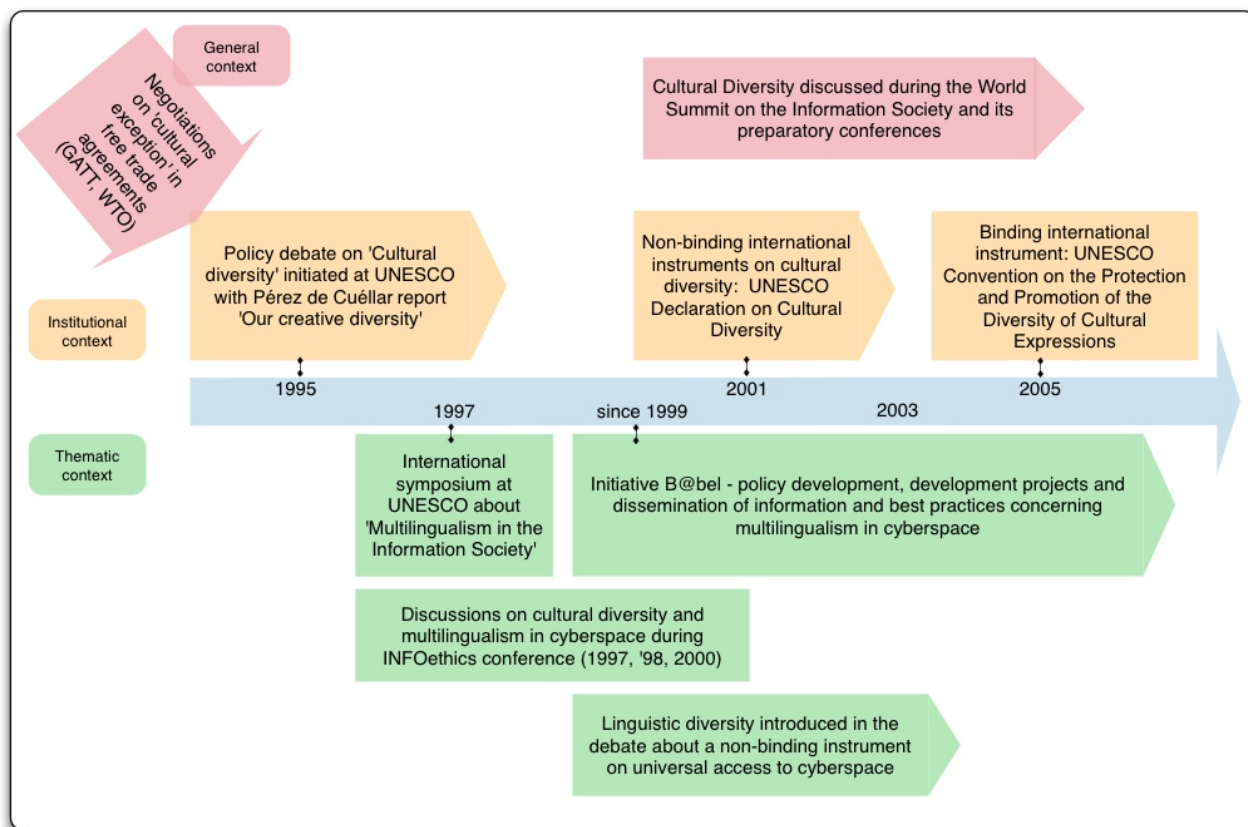


Figure 19: The debate on cultural diversity as the context of UNESCO’s work on linguistic diversity in cyberspace

### 3.2 Analysis of the performative dimension: Preparing an international instrument on cyberspace

*“The drawing up of international guidelines relating to cyberspace is a long-term transborder undertaking and therefore requires a collective effort by the international community to reach agreement in a particularly sensitive field marked by numerous divergences of interest, philosophy and practice.”<sup>348</sup>*

The policy debate on cultural diversity represents the general institutional and thematic context for the third episode of UNESCO’s policy response to the information society. But while these contextual aspects certainly influenced UNESCO’s search for an international consensus on cyberspace issues, they did not initiate it. Instead, the

<sup>348</sup> UNESCO, “Experts meeting on Cyberspace Law”, Working Document, CII/USP/ECY/99/01, CII-98/CONF-601.2 Annex II, September 1998, 7 (UNESDOC).

reflection about the possibility of preparing an international instrument that would regulate selected ethical, social and economic aspects of the new digital environment predated UNESCO's involvement in the cultural diversity debate. In fact, the idea of a legal instrument for cyberspace was discussed for the first time by UNESCO's governing bodies in 1996; the preparation of the text started in 1998, hence one or two years earlier than the drafting process of the 2001 declaration on cultural diversity. However, it would take UNESCO more than 6 years until the Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace was eventually adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in 2003. Moreover, the legal instrument on universal access to cyberspace remained at the stage of a non-binding recommendation and was not, in a second step, followed up by a binding convention, ratified by governments, as it was the case for the topic of cultural diversity.

The length of the process was a result of the many and seemingly insurmountable differences in interests, opinion and discourses that UNESCO had to overcome in order to reach a consensus on the controversial issues. Not only was the adoption of an international instrument on information and cyberspace principally opposed by some member states but, in addition, once the decision to prepare such an instrument was taken, many of the arguments and discursive elements proposed by the Secretariat in the first drafts of the recommendation led to fierce controversies and lengthy debates in all governing bodies' sessions. As a result, it was only possible for UNESCO to reach a consensus and for the instrument to be adopted after several consultation rounds had resulted in major refining of the most contested paragraphs.

The analysis of the performative dimension of this episode starts by retracing the general discussion on the advantages and risks related to an international instrument on the access to information in cyberspace. It then moves on to describing the preparation process of the recommendation, from its start in 1997 and the text's first rejection during the General Conference in 2001 until its final adoption in 2003. The last part of the analysis of the performative dimension focuses more closely on the political tensions that arose during the negotiation of the recommendation's text. Like for the previous two episodes, the discursive dimension is analysed separately from the performative dimension, despite their close interrelation. For this reason, the arguments exchanged during the preparation of the recommendation and the discursive elements eventually inscribed in its final text are discussed in the last sub-chapter about this episode.



The description of the performative dimension of UNESCO's preparation of an international instrument on cyberspace is based on a large amount of documentation, whose bulk was not easily accessible: First of all, all relevant official documents and verbatim records of UNESCO's governing bodies have been consulted (in particular the General Conference sessions in 1999, 2001 and 2003, and the Executive Board meetings between 1996 and 2003). In addition, all archival records from this period have been reviewed, partially scanned and analysed.<sup>349</sup> These archival records include draft versions of the recommendation's text, comments submitted by member states and experts during the various consultation processes, handwritten minutes and summarised proceedings of meetings, as well as UNESCO Secretariat correspondence. As a whole, these records allow for the progress of the preparation process and the positions of the various actors involved as well as their practices to be retraced. In addition, the desk and archive research was complemented by interviews with actors and observers involved in the process, in particular George Dupont, Divina Frau-Meigs (by email), Victor Montviloff, Françoise Rivière, Henrikas Yushkiavitchus, Alain Modoux, Ronald Koven, Milagros del Corral (by email) and Philippe Quéau, and correspondence with other actors who preferred to remain anonymous.<sup>350</sup>

### **A UNESCO sponsored framework for cyberspace**

The idea of UNESCO working towards the adoption of an international instrument on cyberspace issues was discussed by UNESCO's member states for the first time in autumn 1996. During the 150<sup>th</sup> session of the Executive Board, its members held their first large debate on the Information Highways, in which they discussed a number of strategic actions that should "place UNESCO at the forefront of the international debate on this important subject".<sup>351</sup> The debate mostly revolved around the proposal of, first, a UNESCO Conference on Communication and Information for Development to be held in 1998 and, secondly, the formulation of a body of principles applicable to cyberspace. The idea of the conference was to "focus on development issues to which information and communication can make a meaningful contribution" and to "address the obvious,

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<sup>349</sup> Also for this period, most of these records could be accessed before their official transfer to the UNESCO Archives; therefore no archive codes are available for the bulk of the quoted documents.

<sup>350</sup> For more background information about the interviewees, see Appendix n. 1, "List of interviewees".

<sup>351</sup> The debate was based on a document proposed by the CII Sector (UNESCO, "The Challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO", 150 EX/15, 16 August 1996 [UNESDOC]). The verbatim records of the discussions are available in the proceedings of the Executive Board session (UNESCO, "Summary records", 150 EX/SR.1-17, 30 January 1997 [UNESDOC]).

but difficult, ethical questions” of the new technological and informational environment.<sup>352</sup> Although the conference never eventually took place, the majority of the Executive Board members welcomed its proposal during the session in 1996.<sup>353</sup> At the same time, the international community appeared to be much more divided with regard to the establishment of norms or principles on cyberspace. While the idea was supported by some states, others were rather sceptical. There were many reasons for this:

First of all, the proposal of preparing a body of norms and principles, as had been put forward by the UNESCO Secretariat in preparation for the Executive Board’s debate, was rather vague and listed a large range of legal and ethical aspects that such a framework should cover:

“The principal aim is to foster discussion of an original doctrine on cyberspace, which goes beyond the multimedia aspects, by including more general principles of a legal and ethical nature. Issues such as freedom of expression and the interrelation of a series of free speech issues that have arisen in cyberspace, known as attribution, integrity, anonymity, autonomy and accountability, safety, morality and violence in the cyberspace will be studied. Particular attention will be paid to new proposals of law enforcement, privacy and encryption, equal access to cyberspace and the right to receive information reconciling impartiality and universal access, and exploring the basic role of international law and conflicts of law related to sovereignty, competition issues and labour law.”<sup>354</sup>

In addition, the proposal disregarded the fact that many of the named aspects—in particular the legal and security-related ones— did not fall into UNESCO’s fields of competence; instead, it presented the organisation as the ideal forum for reaching consensus on all cyber issues:

“As the specialized intellectual agency of the United Nations system, UNESCO is a natural forum for consensus-building on ‘cyberlaw’ and ‘cyberethics’ and is ready to offer its services to the international community with the purpose of gradually establishing a body of principles applicable to cyberspace.”<sup>355</sup>

But most importantly, the proposal immediately evoked associations with UNESCO’s last attempt at mobilising the international community in order to find a consensus on principles and codes of conduct for the coordination of the information and

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<sup>352</sup> UNESCO, “The Challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO”, 150 EX/15, 16 August 1996, 10ff (UNESDOC).

<sup>353</sup> Recall that the plan of the conference, which was already discussed in the previous chapters, was dropped in favour of the INFOethics conference series and ITU’s World Summit on the Information Society.

<sup>354</sup> UNESCO, “The Challenges of the information highways: the role of UNESCO”, 150 EX/15, 16 August 1996, 12 (UNESDOC).

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

communication environment. Accordingly, some countries warned that the proposed framework should not represent a set of binding principles. This kind of normative attempt could be understood as a revival of the calls for a New World Information and Communication Order, an association which would put at risk not only any possibility of reaching an agreement on cyberspace issues but also UNESCO's status as a reliable international agency:

“[Le délégué d’Autriche] n’évoque cette époque [du NOMIC] que pour souligner l’attachement farouche de certains, surtout les praticiens de l’information, à la liberté d’information et de communication et la nécessité de prendre en compte cette sensibilité afin d’éviter que l’UNESCO soit de nouveau confrontée à des épreuves analogues et n’ait à en subir les graves séquelles à long terme. [...] Il convient donc de tirer les leçons de cette regrettable expérience, de réfléchir mûrement avant de se lancer dans des entreprises concernant l’information et la communication.”<sup>356</sup>

And as a matter of fact, this fear was not entirely unfounded, as more authoritarian governments, like the Chinese government, did announce that they

“supported greater involvement of UNESCO in the future in the development of norms concerning the regulation of the information superhighway, with a view to preventing the circulation, in the influential mass media and Internet, of any subject-matter which advocated violence, pornography or racism, or which constituted interference with other countries’ national sovereignty”.<sup>357</sup>

Despite these concerns, the reflection on the possibility of working towards a consensus on fundamental principles of cyberspace continued. As a follow up to the last session’s debates, in April 1997, the Executive Board discussed a document prepared by the CII Sector, in which the project of an international instrument on cyberspace was proposed in more concrete terms and with clearer ambitions:

“UNESCO, as the ‘intellectual’ Specialized Agency of the United Nations, is a natural forum for building consensus on issues related to cyberspace. The Organization will not only actively contribute to reflection in other international forums, but also take the lead in *drawing up a body of principles applicable to cyberspace*, with a view to *reaching universal agreement* at the threshold of the twenty-first century. A starting point would be the *preparation of an ‘International Declaration on Info-Ethics and Info-Rights’*, with particular emphasis on problems such as freedom of information, access to public domain information, copyright protection,

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<sup>356</sup> UNESCO, “Summary records”, 150 EX/SR.1-17 (11), 30 January 1997, 225 (UNESDOC).

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

electronic privacy and promotion of multilingualism and cultural diversity [emphasis added].”<sup>358</sup>

Later the same year, in autumn 1997, the debate on an international framework for cyberspace was taken to a higher level when a preliminary report was presented to the General Conference concerning the “Feasibility of an international instrument on the establishment of a legal framework relating to cyberspace and of a recommendation on the preservation of a balanced use of languages in cyberspace”.<sup>359</sup> The title of the report in itself already indicated a shift regarding the focus and goal of the intended instrument: On the one hand, the proposed instrument would only concern a *legal* framework for cyberspace and would consequently not tackle ethical or societal questions that cannot be regulated by law. On the other hand, the title also referred to a second instrument that was to deal with the particular issue of linguistic diversity in the Internet. This was the first time that, within UNESCO, the call for an international consensus document on cyberspace issues was linked so explicitly to the aspect of cultural and linguistic diversity. It can therefore be interpreted as the first sign of the discursive shift through which UNESCO tried to reach an agreement on the contested Internet questions.

However, although the “balanced use of languages in cyberspace” was mentioned in the title, it was not paid any further consideration in the content of the report. Instead, the report focused only on the problem of cyberspace “posing increasingly complex questions for international law” and new legal requirements for national jurisdiction.<sup>360</sup> In particular with regard to free flow of information, freedom of speech and IPRs, these “multijurisdictional problems [...] could become a source of international conflict if they are not treated in a timely and reasonable fashion”.<sup>361</sup> Therefore, the authors of the report saw the urgent need for a new international framework within which these problems could be addressed.

But in view of the differences of interests, traditions and (legal and juridical) practices, the report also acknowledges that the preparation of such a framework would be a long-term undertaking. It therefore recommended starting, as a first step, with the preparation of a non-binding draft declaration on the basis of a set of commonly agreed guidelines and

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<sup>358</sup> UNESCO, “The implementation of 150 EX/Decision 3.5.1 concerning the challenges of the Information Highways: the role of UNESCO”, 151 EX/16, 21 April 1997, 3 (UNESDOC).

<sup>359</sup> UNESCO, “Preliminary report by the Director-General on the feasibility of an international instrument on the establishment of a legal framework relating to cyberspace and of a recommendation on the preservation of a balanced use of languages in cyberspace”, 29 C/23, September 1997 (UNESDOC).

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

principles to be discussed by UNESCO's governing bodies. Following the approval of such a declaration, it would be possible to consider, as a second step, whether it is appropriate and feasible to work towards a legally binding instrument that could strengthen existing international agreements. This was exactly the procedure that was followed for UNESCO's declaration and convention on cultural diversity, adopted in 2001 and 2005. However, as the remainder of the chapter will show, for the distinctly more controversial aspects related to cyberspace, the plan did not work out quite that way.

The extent to which the project of even a solely non-binding agreement was contentious for the international community was once again reflected by the debates that followed the report's presentation during the General Conference in 1997. In the Executive Board session of the previous year, several member states had already expressed their wish for the organisation *not* to undertake any normative actions but to concentrate instead on the collection of relevant information about best practices and existing legislations concerning the various aspects that the instrument was supposed to address.<sup>362</sup> Thus, in 1997, a resolution proposing a "draft recommendation on the provision of universal access to the multicultural heritage of humanity through the promotion and use of multilingualism in cyberspace" was only adopted after a working group amended its wording in order to extenuate those formulations that would ascribe an exceedingly normative role to UNESCO.<sup>363</sup> This resolution, as contested as its adoption was, is the starting point of our analysis of the long and contentious preparation process of the recommendation. The previously encountered difficulties were the same ones that accompanied the process until its end in 2003 and hit their peak around the General Conference in 2001 when the proposed draft failed to reach consensus.

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<sup>362</sup> For details about the discussions, see UNESCO, "Records of the General Conference", 29 C/Proceedings, § 2.69 (UNESDOC). For the debate on the report, the resolution and some last minute amendments to its wording, see *ibid.* 726ff.

<sup>363</sup> UNESCO, "Feasibility of an international instrument on the establishment of a legal framework relating to cyberspace and of a recommendation on the preservation of a balanced use of languages in cyberspace", 29 C/Resolutions, Resolution 36 adopted on 12 November 1997 (UNESDOC). The working group preparing the amendment was composed of representatives from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Russian Federation, Spain, Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Regarding the motivations for extenuating the formulations, see also Dieter Offenhäusser, "Wenn gestern schon Geschichte ist". Das UNESCO-Hauptprogramm IV: Kommunikation, Information und Informatik", *UNESCO Heute* 4 (1997): 75.

## The preparation process

Just like the drafting of the Information For All Programme, also the preparation of an international instrument on ethical and other cyberspace-related issues was seen as part of UNESCO's official policy response to the challenges of the information society. However, in comparison to the process leading up to IFAP's inception in 2001, the preparation process of the instrument was even more complex and difficult. While the creation of IFAP was complicated by the resistances and often incompatible interests of the professional communities involved in UNESCO's work on information and informatics issues, the Secretariat could, however, count on their pro-active assistance for shaping the programme's content and for convincing their respective governments to support it. For the recommendation on cyberspace the situation was different: neither was UNESCO able to draw on a long-standing group of experts to take over the drafting of all necessary texts, nor did its staff have any structural support in convincing its member states' community about the necessity, content and wording of the instrument.

For the sake of clarity, the description of the recommendation's preparation process is divided into a series of steps, distinguished on the basis of the progress, the actors involved and the problems encountered.

### *Cyberspace Law: Internal contentions and ideological differences*

The fear some member states had concerning an exceedingly normative role played by UNESCO in the regulation of cyberspace was not the only controversy the UNESCO Secretariat had to face before being able to start drafting the recommendation. In addition, the preparation of the instrument started with a period of infighting related to institutional disarrangements leading to a number of parallel efforts, and, on a more substantial level, to ideological differences within the CII Sector.

These controversies began when UNESCO convened an additional experts meeting as a preliminary session to the INFOethics conference in Monaco in September 1998. While the INFOethics conference —analysed in detail in the first empirical chapter— was dealing with ethical and societal questions of the information society that also often had a legal dimension, this second expert meeting was dedicated to legal aspects only. Accordingly, this “Expert Meeting on Cyberspace Law” assembled 22 experts —including some of the legal scholars involved in INFOethics— and 18 observers to discuss options for a “legal and ethical framework”, an effort viewed as the “first stage in the process” of

harmonising future cyberspace law and the preparation of the instrument on cyberspace to be adopted by UNESCO.<sup>364</sup>

Although the effort was very similar to the work done in the context of the INFOethics conference series, the Expert Meeting on Cyberspace Law was not coordinated by the same CII staff. Instead, the person responsible was a young Spanish consultant, Teresa Fuentes, who had been transferred to the Information and Informatics Division (CII/INF) from the Culture Sector in order to support the team working on INFOethics under Philippe Quéau's direction with her legal expertise.<sup>365</sup> While the INFOethics organisers were sceptical about an additional legal experts' group holding a meeting back to back with their own event, the tensions in the division further increased when, in 1999, UNESCO's Director-General Mayor created a special Task Force on Cyberspace Law and Ethics within the CII Sector as a parallel structure to the existing team working on information ethics.<sup>366</sup> The new team —headed by Bruno de Padirac, a French staff member who had not previously been part of the sector— was charged with a number of tasks that had previously fallen under Quéau's Information and Informatics Division, most particularly the preparation of an instrument on cyberspace.<sup>367</sup>

In order to accomplish this work, the task force set up a webpage on the CII website that introduced its strategy for the development of such a framework.<sup>368</sup> In addition, it published an edited volume that brought together contributions by some of the legal experts who had attended the 1998 meeting. The purpose of the volume was “to examine

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<sup>364</sup> UNESCO, “Experts meeting on Cyberspace Law”, Working Document, CII/USP/ECY/99/01, CII-98/CONF-601.2 Annex II, September 1998, 3 (UNESDOC). At the close of the event, a set of principles and some recommendations concerning activities to be undertaken by UNESCO were adopted and submitted to UNESCO's Director-General; they are included in UNESCO, “Report of the Expert Meeting on Cyberspace Law”, CII/USP/ECY/99/01, 22 February 1999 (UNESDOC).

<sup>365</sup> Milagros del Corral, Email interview, 27 February 2015; Montviloff, Personal interview.

<sup>366</sup> UNESCO, “Reinforcement and coordination of UNESCO's activities relating to cyberspace and establishment of a World Panel on Communication and Information”, DG Note 99/7, 22 February 1999 (UNESDOC).

<sup>367</sup> In interviews and informal conversations, it was suggested several times that Fuentes had been part of the close circle of the then Director-General Major and therefore able to convince him of the necessity of such a new structure and de Padirac's particular competence for the topic. Although no documentation can be found that could prove these personal arrangements, they are not unusual for UNESCO. For more details about Major's leadership style, see Courrier, *L'Unesco sans peine*, 245ff.

<sup>368</sup> The webpage of the special Task Force on Cyberspace Law and Ethics is still accessible via the Internet Archive Project: <https://web.archive.org/web/20011129151904/http://www.unesco.org/cybersociety> (last accessed 3 February 2014).

the international dimensions of cyberspace law and the timeliness of drawing up the most appropriate international standard instrument for this new environment”.<sup>369</sup>

Unsurprisingly, these new arrangements were not welcomed by Quéau’s division which perceived the new team as an unwarranted competitor to the successful INFOethics series.<sup>370</sup> In fact, it is possible to interpret de Padirac and Fuentes’ efforts as an attempt to establish the new task force as an alternative Obligatory Passage Point that would channel all contributions to the planned international instrument whose preparation had been authorised by the decision of the General Conference in 1997; thus, none of the documents issued by the new task force failed to refer to the General Conference’s decision, which seemed to be used as a justification for its own existence and responsibility.<sup>371</sup> But this perception was, as it appeared, shared neither by the CII/INF team, which was behind the initial proposal of the international instrument, nor by the ADG Yushkiavitshus, who equally mistrusted the efforts of the new structure.<sup>372</sup> Accordingly, during the INFOethics conference in 1998, Yushkiavitshus also expressed a very critical stance on the attempts to formulate a *legal* framework and, instead, emphasised the efforts to find a consensus on *ethical and social* principles that would impose on member states simply a moral obligation to respect them:

“A meeting of legal experts took place just before this Congress. Normally surgeons suggest an operation, priests a prayer and legal experts a law. I was glad to find that in this case the legal experts resisted this temptation and behaved rather cautiously. It is doubtful that there will be a strict international law for cyberspace in the near future. However, a statement of principles encouraging self-regulation could calm the unnecessary fears of those who are in favour of strict regulation, and of those who believe that the Internet developed so successfully because governments did not understand what was happening and that when they did it was too late.”<sup>373</sup>

While the infighting evoked the appearance of purely internal competition for responsibilities and influence, it also implied a more substantial conflict, which has been described by the new Task Force on Cyberspace Law and Ethics as an “ideological

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<sup>369</sup> Bruno de Padirac, ed., *The International Dimensions of Cyberspace Law* (Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2000), xv. The book was planned to be the first volume in a series on cyberspace law, which never saw the light of day, however, due to the contentions within the sector.

<sup>370</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview.

<sup>371</sup> See also Memo sent by Teresa Fuentes to ADG/CII, CII/INF/TF.99/02, 23 February 1999 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). In this memo, Fuentes claimed that the responsibility of drafting the progress report about the recommendation on cyberspace would lie with her.

<sup>372</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview; Yushkiavitshus, Personal interview.

<sup>373</sup> Henrikas Yushkiavitshus, “Opening Address”, in: UNESCO, *INFOethics '98. Final Report and proceedings*, 43.



opposition”.<sup>374</sup> In fact, the small team justified its attempts to appropriate the preparation of the international instrument on cyberspace by arguing that Quéau’s division would defend a “neo-communist and libertarian” ideology and would confuse the public interest with claims for common goods and for making information available free of charge; in addition, Quéau’s team would denounce the United States and its private sector as adversaries of free and universal access to information. In contrast to this standpoint, de Padirac’s task force promoted its own more moderate approach, supporting intellectual creativity, industrial innovation and fair access in order to find a balance between private and public interests and, hence, to contribute to the global good of society as a whole.<sup>375</sup> Although it was certainly overemphasised in the attempt to justify the new task force’s role and existence, this ideological confrontation is interesting as it not only reiterated the controversies encountered during the INFOethics conference. In addition, it also anticipated the contentions that surfaced during the drafting process between the UNESCO Secretariat, on the one hand, and certain member states, observers and the United States, on the other hand. For this reason, the arguments of both positions will be analysed in more detail in the sub-chapter on the discursive dimension of this episode. Before this, the chapter continues with the description of the recommendation’s preparation and the difficulties encountered once the initial internal conflicts were overcome. Indeed, the strategy of Quéau and his team of simply ignoring the task force’s attempts to seize the preparation process was eventually successful. After the year 2000, no evidence can be found that the task force’s members continued to intervene in the drafting process or had any visible influence on the content of the different versions of the draft recommendation.<sup>376</sup>

#### *Preparation of first drafts: Search for experts and concrete issues*

Due to the internal controversies and to a general lack of time, the draft recommendation was not ready to be presented in 1999. Following the formal requirements, a preliminary report about the problem to be regulated and the scope of the regulating action needed to

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<sup>374</sup> UNESCO, Memo ECY/99/A/B22/79, 31 December 1999 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Officially, the special task force for cyberlaw was in place until the institutional changes that followed the appointment of a new ADG for Communication and Information, Abdul Waheed Khan, in 2001. However, as some interviewees confirmed, it did not have any influence and played an isolated role within the sector (Paul Hector, Personal interview, 8 November 2013; Montviloff, Personal interview).

be sent to member states at least fourteen months before the General Conference <sup>377</sup> — a deadline that the CII Sector was not able to meet. Around that time, in 1998, the CII/INF Division was still busy with preliminary consultations and with preparing the merger of PGI and IIP. Consequently, instead of a draft recommendation, only an interim report was presented during the General Conference in 1999, justified by the need for further consultation:

“The first consultations undertaken to this effect by the Director-General led him to the conclusion that it would be premature to prepare such a draft recommendation for the 30<sup>th</sup> session of the General Conference. The preparation of a truly pertinent standard-setting document in this complex and rapidly evolving domain would require more extensive and diversified consultations.”<sup>378</sup>

As a consequence, the member states deferred the recommendation to the following session of the General Conference, taking place two years later in 2001. In the meantime, they demanded that UNESCO increase its efforts related to linguistic diversity and proposed four concrete points on how to do it. The draft recommendation on universal access to cyberspace was only one small action point in the list of actions in favour of multilingualism.<sup>379</sup> This indicated a clear change of focus: the priority of the proposed draft recommendation now seemed to be the issue of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in cyberspace instead of the complex of problems related to universal access, which was shifted to the second position.

After this decision, the preparatory work on the draft recommendation seriously started in spring 2000. However, the process was in clear disadvantage compared to the preparation of the declaration on cultural diversity, which was taking place in parallel and for which the Secretariat was able to draw on the preparatory work and the support of a large and very proactive civil society network. For the cyberspace recommendation, the CII Sector

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<sup>377</sup> The formal requirements regarding the preparation and adoption of international instruments are laid down in the rules and regulations of the General Conference see UNESCO, *Manual of the General Conference. 2002 edition* (Paris: UNESCO, 2002), chapter E (UNESDOC). For more details about the different normative instruments of UNESCO, see also Yusuf, ed., *Standard-Setting in UNESCO*.

<sup>378</sup> UNESCO, “Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 30 C/31, 16 August 1999, 1 (UNESDOC). The interim report provided a summary of the work the Secretariat had carried out regarding the recommendation and, in particular, proposed for the first time the Initiative B@bel in support of linguistic and cultural diversity on the Internet.

<sup>379</sup> UNESCO, “Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 30 C/Resolutions, Resolution 37 adopted on 17 November 1999 (UNESDOC), after amendments by France and Germany.

first needed to identify competent experts who could help them to formulate the first drafts.<sup>380</sup>

As a first step, in May and June 2000, they mandated four “experts [...] closely linked to the concept of universal access to cyberspace”<sup>381</sup> to prepare reports that could serve as input for the recommendation. These reports, which dealt with (1) the role of public authorities in access provision, (2) the impact of global trends on universal access, (3) copyright and access and (4) the protection of human dignity in the digital age, were the ones that also served as background documents for the third INFOethics conference, which took place later in 2000 and is analysed in detail in the chapter on the respective episode.

The early phase of the recommendation’s preparation process drew quite heavily on the network of experts built around the INFOethics conference.<sup>382</sup> These experts had been chosen by the CII/INF Division and its director Philippe Quéau and many of them supported his ideas and arguments regarding the fair use principle, the importance of the public domain and the consideration of information as a common good. Hence, albeit from different backgrounds and professional fields, they formed a discourse coalition around these ideas, which helped the CII Sector to formulate them more articulately and to advance the topics within the organisation. But even with the help of the four expert studies, the work on the preliminary report only progressed very slowly during this early phase, leading to restlessness within the CII/INF Division, which saw its goal of reaching an international consensus on the issue of universal access at risk:

“Considering that the report is a document that could reach 50 to 60 pages, we are definitely behind schedule. I think it will be extremely important for us all to succeed with this challenge. Our overall strategy on ‘universal access’ is at stake, as you know well.”<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> “Il faut identifier très rapidement un consultant pour rédiger le rapport et le projet de recommandation concernant le multilingualism. J’attends vos suggestions dès que possible”. Email sent by Philippe Quéau to Victor Montviloff, “Fwd: leonardo education informe sur la nouvelle approche de la commission par rapport aux langues”, 26 May 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>381</sup> See UNESCO, “Preliminary report on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, included in a letter sent by UNESCO’s Director-General to all member states, “Consultation on the promotion and use on multilingualism in cyberspace”, CL/3569, 15 December 2000, 4 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

<sup>382</sup> Quéau, Personal interview.

<sup>383</sup> Email sent by Philippe Quéau to Victor Montviloff, “report on recommendation”, 21 July 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

In addition, the division needed to integrate the new subject of “multilingualism” into the overall strategy on universal access. Thus, they also mandated two additional expert studies about linguistic diversity in cyberspace and the possibilities of policy regulation, which at the same time also served as input for the Initiative B@bel.<sup>384</sup> Although the combination of the subject of universal access and multilingualism within one recommendation project had been requested by UNESCO’s member states, the CII/INF Division was well aware of the risk this entailed:

“There is a rampant confusion between the themes of universal access and of multilingualism in MS’s [Member States] ‘minds’. We must clear this out in a convincing way — without eluding the problem.”<sup>385</sup>

For this reason, the division eventually decided to continue treating the issues as two interrelated but separate sets of problems and to address them in separate sections of the draft recommendations.

*Preliminary report on the recommendation: Member states consultation and first expert deliberations*

With some months of delay regarding the official 14-month deadline, in December 2000, the preliminary report on the recommendation was eventually sent to member states for comments by the sector, now under the leadership of Alain Modoux and with the new name of Sector for Communication and Information (CI).<sup>386</sup> It set forth the position regarding the problems to be regulated and proposed that the draft recommendation should cover four key aspects of universal access:

- (1) Facilitating access to telematics services,
- (2) Promoting multilingualism,
- (3) Facilitating access through development of public domain content, and
- (4) Facilitating access through application of exceptions to copyright.

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<sup>384</sup> Christian Boitet, “Contribution à un rapport préliminaire sur la promotion et l’usage du plurilinguisme dans le cyberspace”, July 2000, and Raymond Renard, “Etude préliminaire pour la création d’un programme sur la promotion et l’usage du multilinguisme dans le cyberspace”, February 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>385</sup> Email sent by Philippe Quéau to Victor Montviloff, “report on recommendation”, 21 July 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>386</sup> Letter sent by UNESCO’s Director-General to all member states, “Consultation on the promotion and use on multilingualism in cyberspace”, CL/3569, 15 December 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

These four categories proposed in December 2000 remained the same until the eventual adoption of the recommendation in 2003; only their order and wording changed in the attempt to accommodate the concerns of member states.

During the first consultation round in spring 2001, UNESCO received 29 responses by member states commenting on the preliminary report. The most substantial remarks were made by Canada, Congo, France, Germany, Iceland, Oman, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and the Ukraine.<sup>387</sup> Their comments —whose content is analysed in more detail in the sub-chapter on the discursive dimension— mainly criticised the vagueness and lengthiness of most arguments and terminology, the lack of links with already existing UNESCO programmes (like IFAP and the Initiative B@bel), and the impossibility of operationalising most of the proposed measures. While the arguments on linguistic diversity received by far the greatest attention and encouragement, most normative proposals, such as the mention of a possible new human right for access, and all provisions related to copyright exceptions were met with reservations.

In the follow-up of the consultation, the replies of member states were submitted to an expert group that met in April 2001 to finalise the first version of the draft recommendation. In contrast to the INFOethics conferences, where experts were chosen by the Quéau's division, here, the 24 experts were selected in consultation with member states through UNESCO's six electoral groups so as to ensure an adequate geographical distribution. Moreover, in order to accommodate a wide range of views, observers were also given the opportunity to express their suggestions and criticism.<sup>388</sup>

The main aim of the meeting was to define certain key concepts and definitions more precisely and to specify the basic principles to be agreed on by member states. To speed up the process, the experts established a smaller drafting group with the mandate of consolidating all comments and elaborating a revised version of the draft recommendation, to be adopted by the last plenary session.<sup>389</sup> But the differences in

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<sup>387</sup> The responses of member states and the respective correspondence are part of the records of the CI Sector, which were consulted before their official archiving.

<sup>388</sup> The meeting was attended by observers from two intergovernmental organisations and 23 observers representing 17 member states, one non-member state (the US), and five non-governmental organisations. For details on the working process, see the draft document for the ADG's introductory remarks to the General Conference in 2001, prepared by Victor Montviloff, 24 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>389</sup> The drafting group was chaired by Professor Mohammed Sheya (Tanzania) and further included Zubeida Desai, South Africa (representing Africa), Ali Mohamed Zaid, Yemen (representing the Arab States), Elizabeth Longworth, New Zealand (representing Asia and the Pacific), Rainer Kuhlen, Germany (representing Europe I), Imants Freibergs, Latvia (representing Europe II), and Gerardo Garcia Cabrera, Cuba (representing Latin America and the Caribbean).

opinion were so great that the drafting was not concluded by the end of the meeting but completed through an online forum set up by the Institute of Library Science of the Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany. This forum was similar to the one used three years earlier for the continuation of the discussions started at the INFOethics conference in 1997 and was indeed managed by same person, the German information scientist Rainer Kuhlen, who was also a member of the expert group.<sup>390</sup> All amendments identified through the forum's exchange were then incorporated into the revised draft recommendation after consultation with the other experts.<sup>391</sup>

As a next step, the revised draft was once again discussed by UNESCO's member states during the Executive Board session in June 2001. After a long and substantial debate on new information technologies and ethics, the delegates who took part in the board approved the progress report on the preparation of the draft recommendation without any further deliberation on the content of the revised draft version.<sup>392</sup>

#### *General Conference 2001: Lobbying, official negotiations and a rejection*

Following the progress report's approval through the Executive Board, the revised draft recommendation was circulated to all member states in August 2001, thus respecting the official deadline of 70 days before the General Conference in which the instrument is to be adopted.<sup>393</sup> In response to the circulated draft, a number of member states clearly expressed their disagreement with several key elements of the text, announcing that they would not be able to adopt the document in its present form. Interestingly, the fiercest opposition was not voiced by a UNESCO member state but by a few non-governmental organisations with close ties to the only non-member state involved in the deliberation process, namely the United States. Stirred into action by the idea that UNESCO could try to impose on governments new standards regarding the provision of copyright protected content and information and impinge on the United States' priority given to the "free flow of information", they initiated a vigorous attack against the recommendation that in

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<sup>390</sup> In contrast to the discussion forum on INFOethics, the forum for the drafting of the recommendation text is no longer available on the Internet.

<sup>391</sup> The email exchange between the CI/INF Division and the members of the expert group between 20 April and 8 May 2001 is available in the archival records (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>392</sup> UNESCO, "Progress report on the draft recommendation to member states on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace", 161 EX/16, 14 March 2001 (UNESDOC). The debate was introduced by a keynote speech of Luciano Floridi, professor of philosophy of computing and information, available in exact wording in the proceedings of the Executive Board session: UNESCO, 161 EX/SR.1-16 (SR.7), 31 August 2001, 177ff (UNESDOC)

<sup>393</sup> The draft recommendation was included in UNESCO, "Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace", 31 C/25, 27 July 2001 (UNESDOC).

many regards brought back memories of the controversies around the NWICO movement in the 1970s.

This lobbying initiative appeared to have started in September 2001, when the Motion Pictures Association of America (MPAA)<sup>394</sup> alerted the permanent observer of the United States, Shirley Hart, about UNESCO's seeming attempt to limit the rights of copyright owners:

“HELP! [...] UNESCO is about to adopt a Draft Recommendation highly detrimental to publishers, authors and rightholders everywhere in the world. This draft resolution was brought to our attention by the international Publishers' Association (IPA) in Geneva. We agree that it is very harmful to copyright owners and extremely unbalanced and should not be adopted in its current form.”<sup>395</sup>

Already prior to this, representatives of the International Publishers Association (IPA)<sup>396</sup> and the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers (STM)<sup>397</sup> had taken part in the third INFOethics conference in 2000, where they had been amongst the only ones to openly raise objections to the seemingly common call for more copyright exemptions and an expansion of the public domain.<sup>398</sup> Finding the same ideas inscribed in the first drafts of the recommendation on cyberspace, they first protested to UNESCO's Director-General and, remaining without a reply, subsequently mobilised the opposition of the US government by transmitting a joint position paper which strenuously criticised the planned recommendation, paragraph by paragraph.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) represents the six major Hollywood studios and was founded back in 1922 in order to advance the business interests of its members. Since the 1970s, one of its main activities is the lobbying to protect copyrighted material from illegal distribution and sharing.

<sup>395</sup> Email sent by Bonnie Richardson, Vice President of MPAA, to Shirley Hart, US observer at UNESCO, “FW: UNESCO, draft resolution, 15 Oct – 3 Nov 2001, Paris”, 21 September 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>396</sup> The International Publishers Association was founded in 1896 in Paris to represent the interests of the publishing industry at international level. Its initial aim was to ensure that different countries adopted copyright law and implemented copyright treaties. Since the 1960s it has regular connections with UNESCO, supporting its actions for freedom of expression and the free flow of information.

<sup>397</sup> The STM is an international trade organisation representing the interests of scholarly, scientific, technical, medical and professional publishers.

<sup>398</sup> After the INFOethics conference in 2000, STM complained to UNESCO's Director-General that only two out of thirty panellists represented the view of rights-holders in the information society, which, in addition, “were either ignored or substantially misinterpreted in the so-called proceedings” of the conference. Letter sent by Lex Lefebvre, Secretary General of STM, 9 April 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>399</sup> Position paper of the International Publishers Association and the International Association of Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers sent to the US observer for UNESCO, 21 September 2001, and Annex to the Position Paper (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

After this position statement was circulated among several national delegations, the UNESCO Secretariat eventually responded by arranging for meetings of the US observer, Shirley Hart, with Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General since 1999, and with the recently appointed Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, the Indian communication expert Abdul Waheed Khan, who had just replaced Alain Modoux as ADG/CI in summer 2001.<sup>400</sup>

Less open to the ideas promoted by Quéau and his epistemic community, the new ADG was less inclined to unconditionally back the draft recommendation prepared by his sector and agreed to accommodate the concerns of the US government by asking for the help of the Director of the Division of Cultural Industries and Copyright, Milagros del Corral. In charge of copyright issues within the Culture Sector, del Corral had already intervened during the INFOethics conference in 1997, where she called for a more balanced position with regard to the legal protection of online content. As her division worked in close cooperation with authors, artists and cultural industries, and administered the Universal Copyright Convention<sup>401</sup>, there were strong disagreements between Philippe Quéau and herself regarding his claims related to the public domain and to the application of copyright exemptions to digital content.<sup>402</sup> With del Corral's support, the respective sections of the draft recommendation were amended to accommodate the publisher associations' concerns, resulting in a new version of the text that now expressed more moderate views.<sup>403</sup> In addition, it was also revised by the CI Sector's Division for Freedom of Expression which, in cooperation with the World Press Freedom Committee was responsible for "correcting all free flow of information concerns in the text".<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Briefing for and report of the meeting between the ADG and the US permanent observer, prepared by CI/INF, 25 September 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>401</sup> With the objective to extend international copyright protection globally, the Universal Copyright Convention was adopted under the aegis of UNESCO in 1952 and revised in 1971. It was developed by the organisation as an alternative to the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, adopted in 1886, which was often criticised for only serving the interests of economically strong copyright-exporting countries.

<sup>402</sup> Del Corral, Email interview; Montviloff, Personal interview; Rivière, Personal interview.

<sup>403</sup> Del Corral also expressed her satisfaction with the new wording: "I think we can now say we have a balanced text which everybody can live with" (Email correspondence between Milagros del Corral, Philippe Quéau, and Carlo Scollo Lavizzari, Legal Counsel of IPA, September/October 2001 [consulted before official archiving, no UA code]). Del Corral tried to accommodate IPA's continuous criticism by predicting further amendments during the deliberations of the General Conference: "I did what I could to avoid the worst and I am convinced that there will be many amendments made by delegates at Commission V" (Email sent by del Corral to Lavizzari, "RE: Draft Recommendation C/25 on multilingualism", 26 October 2001 [consulted before official archiving, no UA code]).

<sup>404</sup> Memo sent by DIR CI/FED to ADG/CI, "Draft recommendations 31 C/25", CI/FED/01/45, 19 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). Ronald Koven, Personal interview, 24 February 2015.



But in contrast to the vehement opposition of the US government and its allied lobby organisations, the CI Sector received backing from US information experts who supported the principles and claims of the draft recommendation. In particular, Paul Uhler, director for international scientific and technical information programs at the US National Academy of Sciences (NAS) offered to help to “discreetly advance this matter” by countervailing the publisher lobby’s complaints to the US government.<sup>405</sup> Having prepared himself policy guidelines on public domain and IPR exemptions for the US government, he provided the US State Department with NAS reports and comments supporting the positions expressed in UNESCO’s draft recommendation. With this, he also tried to counter the fear that UNESCO would fall back to its position taken during the NWICO period:

“Nevertheless, most of the document promotes policies that support the traditionally open US approach to broad availability to public-domain information, especially from government sources. This is a significant departure from and great improvement on the old socialist claptrap that UNESCO used to promote under the ‘New World Information Order’ in the 70s, and that led to the US withdrawal.”<sup>406</sup>

However, despite the support by US academics and the additional revisions implemented with the help of the Division of Cultural Industries and Copyright, the UNESCO Secretariat was aware that the instrument’s adoption would not run smoothly.<sup>407</sup> While it could expect the general support of the Group 77 and other countries that have been closely involved in the drafting process —like France, Germany, Russia, Korea and Iceland— it predicted it would encounter strong objections from the Dutch and Finnish delegations and the observers sent by IPA, STM and the World Press Freedom Committee, the latter having been one of the main drivers behind the NGO coalitions against the NWICO movement in the 1970s.

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<sup>405</sup> Email sent by CI/INF, “Fwd: Re: update on policy”, 2 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The support of Paul Uhler is documented by email exchanges between himself and the CI/INF Division, taking place between September and October 2001.

<sup>406</sup> Email sent by Paul Uhler to the US State Department and forwarded to CI/INF, “RE: background on proposed UNESCO info policy”, 2 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>407</sup> Briefing document for the Director-General about the progress report on the draft recommendation, prepared by Victor Montviloff, 17 October 2001, Memo CI/INF/MONT/01/176 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The document pictures several scenarios for the General Conference’s decision on the recommendation, ranging from blunt rejection and the truncation of part on IPRs to the degradation to a declaration instead of a recommendation or the adoption with amendments.

And indeed, the official deliberations on the latest version of the draft recommendation<sup>408</sup>, which took place over several meetings of the Commission V of the General Conference, turned out to be very divisive.<sup>409</sup> In total, 35 member states, six NGOs and one the US observers took the floor and expressed either strong support for or opposition against the draft. In order to find a balance between these opposed views and to revise the text accordingly, the commission established a working group composed of delegates from all commission members.<sup>410</sup> However, during an additional last meeting of the commission, it became clear from the firm reservations of some member states that no agreement could be reached on the modified paragraphs of the draft recommendation.<sup>411</sup> As a consequence, UNESCO's Director-General personally intervened to end the commission's intense debates and to withdraw the draft recommendation from the commission's agenda — a very unusual intervention, which illustrated the potential harmfulness of the recommendation's adoption for the organisation even more clearly.<sup>412</sup> In order to avoid any further political tensions, the Director-General proposed to postpone any decision regarding the draft recommendation until the following General Conference in order to allow for more consultations.<sup>413</sup> Consequently, the recommendation was deferred for another two years.

*Negotiating a consensus: Another round of expert and member state consultations*

Instead of adopting the draft recommendation, in 2001, the General Conference requested that another group of experts review the modifications proposed during the meetings of the Commission V. While preserving the overall strategic objective of equitable and affordable access to information, the parts on IPR provisions in the digital environment needed to be adapted to respond to the expectations of all interested parties.

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<sup>408</sup> While the originally circulated draft had the document code 31 C/25, dated 27 July 2001, the version revised in the few weeks before the General Conference had the code 31 C/25 Corr., 22 October 2001 (UNESDOC).

<sup>409</sup> Koven, Personal interview; Montviloff, Personal interview.

<sup>410</sup> The working group was chaired by Louise Terrillon-Mackay (Canada). The resulting text version was included in UNESCO, "Draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace", 31 C/25 Corr. 2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001 (UNESDOC).

<sup>411</sup> The intense debates are partly reflected in some incomplete handwritten minutes from the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of Commission V and by the summary document "Debate on the Draft Recommendation on Universal Access and Promotion and Use of Multilingualism in Cyberspace", 31 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>412</sup> Rivière, Personal interview.

<sup>413</sup> Montviloff, Personal interview. See also UNESCO, "Address by Koïchiro Matsuura at the 2<sup>nd</sup> expert meeting on the Draft Recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace", DG/2002/28, 25 March 2002, 1 (UNESDOC).

The expert group met in March 2002; it was composed of 18 governmental experts nominated by the chairs of UNESCO's six electoral groups, some of them legal experts specialised on copyright issues.<sup>414</sup> In addition, the meeting was attended by explicitly invited representatives of the World Intellectual Property Organisation as well as a further 52 observers representing 32 member states and 12 NGOs. This important number of observers illustrates well the vast interest shown in the deliberations by governments and by an increasing number of civil society and private sector organisations. Yet, in contrast to the preparation process of UNESCO's instruments on cultural diversity, this interest did not precede the work of UNESCO but was instead triggered by the controversial positions taken by the UNESCO Secretariat in the first drafts of the recommendation.

Since it was only the fourth part of the recommendation, on copyright exemptions, that had been the subject of considerable discussion during the General Conference, the meeting focused mainly on the improvement of this part. Some of the participants called for the total deletion of this fourth part, arguing that copyright issues had already been addressed in WTO and WIPO treaties, to which a large majority of UNESCO member states had subscribed. Yet, others insisted that it would be irresponsible for UNESCO not to take a stand on this important question, considering its implication for the fields covered by the organisation's mandate, most importantly the distribution and sharing of cultural and scientific content.<sup>415</sup> Eventually, the experts decided to delegate the negotiation on this part to an ad-hoc working group of six specialists in intellectual property law who revised the text covering the copyright aspects in order to ensure that it complied with provisions of already existing conventions and standards.<sup>416</sup>

In addition to the governmental experts and observers who took part in this meeting, the modified draft was subsequently discussed and amended by the national experts representing their governments in the intergovernmental council of the recently created Information For All Programme (IFAP). During their first council session in April 2002, the IFAP experts acknowledged the "tremendous progress that had been made since the document was reviewed at the General Conference in 2001", resulting in a text version

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<sup>414</sup> The participating experts came from Mozambique, Republic of Congo, South Africa, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, India, Japan, New Zealand, Belgium, Canada, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Cuba, Bolivia, and Mexico.

<sup>415</sup> Little original documentation of the expert meeting is still available in the archival records of the sector. Thus, the description of the meeting is based on UNESCO, "Report by the Director-General on the consultation process and the revised draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace", 165 EX/16, 23 August 2002 (UNESDOC).

<sup>416</sup> The group was composed of experts from Belgium, Canada, New Zealand and Japan and representatives of IPA and the International Confederation of Music Publishers (ICMP), which had been invited after intervening during the General Conference meeting some months earlier.

that was “shorter, clearer, easier to understand”.<sup>417</sup> However, they still saw the need for further improvement and clarifications, in particular concerning the definition of the “public domain” and the term “information commons”; these were both terms that Quéau had introduced into UNESCO’s discourse in the mid-1990s and that still caused unease to some of UNESCO’s member states due to their close association with the claims behind the NWICO movement in the 1970s.<sup>418</sup>

After the IFAP council had finished its reviews and prepared a consensus version of the draft recommendation, in May 2002, the text was, now for the third time, sent to all member states, relevant international organisations and NGOs.<sup>419</sup> By autumn 2002, the Secretariat had received 33 replies, the most substantive ones from IPA and Japan. While most governments now considered that a suitable balance between the different interests had been found, a few Western countries, such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Japan, were still unsatisfied by the sections on public domain and intellectual property rights.<sup>420</sup> In order to finally achieve a consensus on the contested fourth part of the recommendation, on copyright exemptions, and to avoid its truncation during the next General Conference, it was also necessary to receive the approval of the United States, the only non-member state involved in the negotiations. For this reason, the modified draft was sent, in December 2002, to the US permanent observers at UNESCO, who recommended the deletion of all provisions related to IPRs, despite all the modifications already implemented.<sup>421</sup> But, instead, the wording of some paragraphs was modified once again, now at the highest level through a direct exchange between Françoise Rivière, at that time chief of the UNESCO Director-General’s cabinet, and Terry Miller, then US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Social Issues and former head of the US observer mission to UNESCO, also involving the close cooperation of WIPO.<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> UNESCO, “Oral report of the rapporteur of the 1<sup>st</sup> session of the Intergovernmental Council for IFAP”, 17 April 2002 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The debates of the council are also reflected in the handwritten minutes of the meeting.

<sup>418</sup> UNESCO, “Final Report”, 1<sup>st</sup> session of the Intergovernmental Council for IFAP, IFAP-2002/COUNCIL.I/7, 17 April 2002 (UNESDOC).

<sup>419</sup> Letter sent by ADG/CI to all member states, CI/INF/02/172, 2 May 2002 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>420</sup> This was especially reiterated by IPA, which, despite having taken part in the expert meeting earlier that year, was still worried about these paragraphs undermining existing copyright norms. Most of the member states’ written comments are available in the records of the CI Sector (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The debates during the 165<sup>th</sup> Executive Board meeting are reflected in the official proceedings (UNESCO, “Summary records”, 165 EX/SR.1-9, 16 January 2003 [UNESDOC]).

<sup>421</sup> Reply letter sent by the US Observer mission to ADG/CI, 14 January 2003 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>422</sup> Rivière, Personal interview.

After these high-level negotiations and last readjustments of the text, the draft recommendation was submitted to member states in February 2003 and, without any further amendments, presented for adoption during the General Conference in November 2003.<sup>423</sup> Just like during the previous sessions, before being presented to the plenary, the draft recommendation was first discussed by the Commission V in charge of communication and information issues. During the two meetings dedicated to this debate, delegates of 45 member states and two NGOs took the floor to comment on the new draft. While the majority was now satisfied with the suggested text, some delegates—it had been expected—still criticised the newly formulated section on the balance between the interests of rights-holders and the public interest and recommended further modifications.<sup>424</sup> However, since these proposed changes were only “aspirational in nature and not mandatory and therefore they should not present an obstacle to adoption”, the commission agreed that any attempt to re-open the editing process would put the recommendation’s adoption during this General Conference at risk.<sup>425</sup>

This further deferment of the adoption had not only made any consensus within UNESCO on the topic of universal access and multilingualism unlikely to be reached; it had also entailed that UNESCO would not be able to present the consensus document as its official contribution to the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, which was to take place just some weeks later, in December 2003. In view of this pressure, the commission eventually decided by acclamation to recommend the recommendation’s adoption to the General Conference, despite remaining differences. Hence, six years after the start of its preparation, the recommendation was eventually adopted by vote of the General Conference’s plenary on 15 October 2003, without any further debate and 62 votes in favour and none against.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> The revised draft of the recommendation and further background information on the consultation process were included in UNESCO, “Report by the Director-General on the consultation process and the revised draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, 32 C/27, 6 June 2003 (UNESDOC).

<sup>424</sup> This concern was mainly expressed by delegates of Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The summary of the debates is included in UNESCO, “Oral report of the chairperson of Commission V”, 32 C/INF.31, 3 November 2003 (UNESDOC); and UNESCO, “Report of Commission V”, 32 C/75, 14 October 2003, 13ff (UNESDOC).

<sup>425</sup> “Report by the Director-General on the consultation process and the revised Draft Recommendation on the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, draft prepared by CI/INF, October 2003, 15 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>426</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003 (UNESDOC). See also UNESCO, “Records of the General Conference”, 32 C/Proceedings, 2003, 455 (UNESDOC). The low number of 62 votes, without any abstention or rejection, is due to the fact that plenary sessions of the

The following figure illustrates the details of the preparation process of the draft recommendation from the General Conference decision in 1997 until the adoption in 2003, including the activities of the UNESCO Secretariat, involved experts, UNESCO's member states and other involved interest groups. The arrows indicate whether certain decisions and actions had a traceable influence on others. It becomes clear that the strongest influence emanated from the member states and related interest groups. The Secretariat, however, provided the first drafts of the recommendation's text in which it proposed its key elements and general tone and thereby set the scene for all subsequent debates and amendments. It also served as an OPP since it was mainly in the hands of the Secretariat to consolidate member states' comments and integrate them into the draft document. In contrast to significant influence by governments and the UNESCO Secretariat, experts were much less involved in the drafting process and did not play the pro-active role they held during the creation of IFAP.

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General Conference are usually only attended by those delegates whose governments have a particular interest in the issues discussed during the respective session.

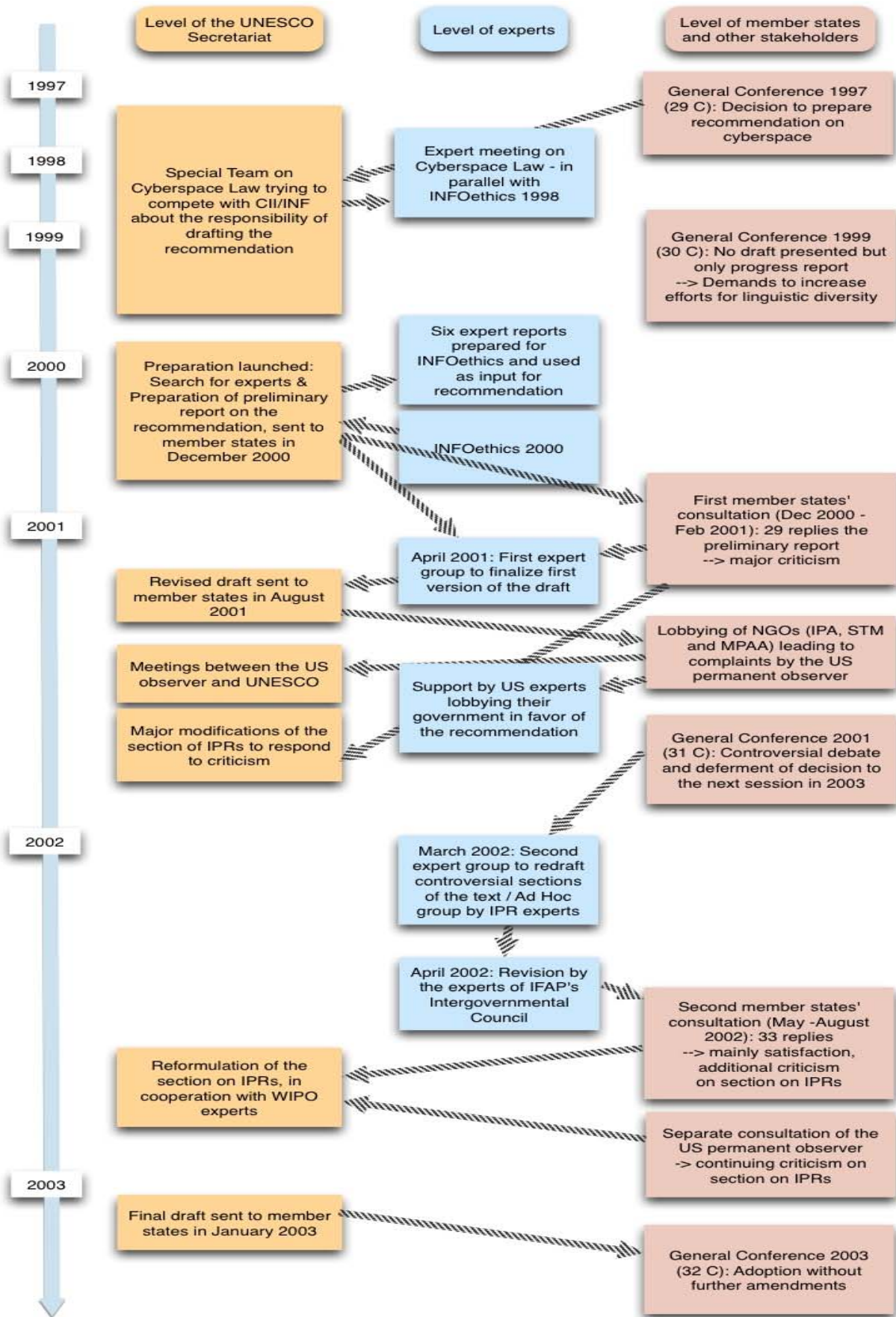


Figure 20: Preparation process of an international instrument on cyberspace

## Procedural mistakes, conflicting interests or ideological differences?

The lack of expert involvement and the crucial influence of UNESCO member states are not the only two aspects for which the third episode of UNESCO's response to the information society differed from the previous two. In addition, the search for an international consensus on cyberspace issues was accompanied by considerable contentions, which had not occurred to such an extent during UNESCO's search for ideas and for an institutional frame for its policy discourse on the information society.

While the internal conflicts that emerged within the CII Sector at the beginning of the recommendation's preparation have already been described, this last sub-chapter analyses the differences between member states and the UNESCO Secretariat, based on the comparison with the preparation of the legal instruments on cultural diversity.

In general, member states criticised the recommendation and the preparation process conducted by UNESCO for two main and interrelated reasons:

First of all, several states found fault in certain procedural aspects of the instrument's preparation, which made it difficult for them to approve its adoption during the General Conference in 2001. This first block of concerns only arose during the first years of preparation of the recommendation and was one of the main reasons behind its rejection in 2001.<sup>427</sup> Indeed, it was mainly the fact that the coordination between the Secretariat and the national delegations and commissions had not been close enough that member states held against UNESCO. To underline this accusation, they compared the drafting of the recommendation on cyberspace with the declaration on cultural diversity that had been prepared in parallel and that was adopted during the same General Conference meeting as the one in which the former was rejected:

“[I]l est évidemment indispensable que le Secrétariat travaille en association étroite et permanente avec les États membres. De ce point de vue, [...] [la déclaration sur la diversité culturelle] était le résultat d'une coopération exemplaire entre le Secrétariat, le Conseil exécutif et les États membres. [...] C'est une méthode qui demande du temps, de l'énergie, mais c'est la bonne méthode. Et je dois dire que si nous n'avons pas réussi à adopter la Recommandation sur le cyberspace, c'est parce qu'une méthode de ce type n'a pas été utilisée et que les États membres ont eu l'impression de se trouver placés

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<sup>427</sup> Another reason for the deferral, which is interesting to note but difficult to observe, was the unwillingness of some countries' delegations, in particular the French one, to divide their attention and energies between the instrument on cyberspace and the one on cultural diversity. Knowing that they had to present both texts to their national parliaments for validation, they gave priority to the instrument on cultural diversity and tried to stall the adoption of the text on cyberspace (Frau-Meigs, Email interview).



devant [...] une version du projet de recommandation qui ne correspondait pas du tout à celle qui avait été mise en circulation auparavant.”<sup>428</sup>

Moreover, some member states objected that the UNESCO Secretariat had not respected the official formalities involved in preparing international instruments, in particular with regard to deadlines. In this context, the Secretariat was criticised for modifying the text of the draft recommendation only shortly before the meeting of the General Conference. These late changes would not have left sufficient time for governments to consult appropriate experts or authorities to seek advice regarding the legal problems the recommendation addressed. Furthermore, these last-minute modifications entailed an important number of amendments brought to the text during the General Conference itself, eventually resulting in a lack of coherence which made the recommendation’s adoption during the same session impossible.<sup>429</sup> These reproaches on the procedural aspects were also made by those member states that were, in principle, in favour of the instrument. A good example is France, which —although agreeing “with the spirit of the resolution”— complained that the Secretariat had “carried out the procedure in an obscure fashion, since it has modified a document that it is now attempting to impose”.<sup>430</sup>

The second criticism was much more fundamental than the one of the preparation procedure as it was related to all content-related objections. Directed at the substance of the recommendation, these objections were also much more difficult to overcome through formal adjustments or the respect of official rules. In general, member states were unsatisfied with the content and objectives of the proposed provisions regarding IPRs and the public domain and expressed two main points of criticism:

First of all, some member states tried to compromise UNESCO’s efforts to propose solutions to the difficult questions of copyright exemptions in the digital environment by questioning the organisation’s responsibility for these topics; this perspective was most prominently expressed by Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands but also by the few non-governmental organisations that actively tried to influence the deliberations.<sup>431</sup> They

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<sup>428</sup> Comment by France during the plenary session of the General Conference in 2001, see UNESCO, “Records of the General Conference”, 31 C/Proceedings, 2001, 588 (UNESDOC).

<sup>429</sup> UNESCO, “Oral report of the chairperson of commission V”, 31 C/INF.25, 8 November 2001, 8 (UNESDOC).

<sup>430</sup> Summary document “Debate on the Draft Recommendation on Universal Access and Promotion and Use of Multilingualism in Cyberspace”, 31 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The French objection to the recommendation was, furthermore, motivated by the conservative government’s progressive shift to a liberal policy approach to information technology, in which the cultural and ethical aspects were no longer a strong priority (Frau-Meigs, Email interview).

<sup>431</sup> Recall that these NGOs were most prominently MPAA, STM, IPA and the World Press Freedom Committee.

felt that questions of intellectual property rights and their exemptions, such as the fair use principle, were mainly of an economic and legal nature and therefore not a subject to be regulated by an international organisation in charge of cultural, educational and scientific issues.<sup>432</sup> Those countries and non-governmental organisations felt that they should instead be dealt with by more competent organisations like WIPO and WTO — just like the trade concerns related to audiovisual and cultural goods, which were discussed in the context of the cultural diversity debate. In the critics' opinion, only these institutions would dispose of the expertise and knowledge necessary for negotiating agreements on such sensitive sets of problems touching on important economic and social interests.<sup>433</sup> Yet, recognising, to some extent, the additional value that UNESCO could bring to the debate on IPRs, member states felt that, at the very least, the organisation should not duplicate the efforts of other organisations and should therefore build on existing conventions, guidelines and agreements instead of “re-inventing the wheel”.<sup>434</sup> Otherwise, UNESCO would risk adopting provisions that were in conflict with legislations already in place in many member states.

The second point of criticism was even more essential: The same member states and NGOs that questioned UNESCO's responsibility for copyright questions felt that the positions taken in the draft recommendation were clearly biased in favour of the interests of users and the general public. Consequently, they felt the recommendation would not take into account justified interests of authors, producers and intermediaries and would therefore be detrimental to rights-holders. In light of these complaints, it was apparent that, as was the case for the subject of cultural diversity, the questions of IPRs and public domain were highly controversial within UNESCO because they were caught in the contradiction between member states' commercial interests and UNESCO's cultural, societal and educational orientation.

But while these content-related concerns were voiced by several, mostly highly developed member states, it was the only non-member state involved that held a particular position in the negotiations, namely the United States. Although they had still not re-joined the organisation since their withdrawal in 1984, it was the UNESCO Director-General's explicit wish to involve the United States in the preparation process “because of the

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<sup>432</sup> UNESCO, “Oral report of the chairperson of commission V”, 31 C/INF.25, 8 November 2001, 7 (UNESDOC).

<sup>433</sup> This claim was countered by UNESCO with reference to the Culture Sector's long-standing work on copyright questions and as administrator of the Universal Copyright Convention.

<sup>434</sup> UNESCO, “Oral report of the chairperson of commission V”, 31 C/INF.25, 8 November 2001, 14f (UNESDOC). This position was, for example, also shared by countries like Germany and Iceland which were generally in favour of the recommendation but felt the need for better coordination with existing instruments.

likelihood that the USA will be a Member State at the time the document comes to adoption by the General Conference” in 2003.<sup>435</sup> For this reason, the US government took part in all sessions of UNESCO’s governing bodies as an observer, was given access to all draft versions of the recommendation and was included in the three rounds of member states’ consultation.

The motive for this strong involvement was quite simple: since the appointment of Koïchiro Matsuura, replacing Federico Mayor as new Director-General in 1999, the strategic goal of convincing the United States to re-join UNESCO had become the organisation’s main priority.<sup>436</sup> As a result, all other content-related and political objectives were subordinated to this overarching priority, especially if they were considered to be counterproductive. In view of this, it is not surprising that the CI Sector’s attempts at finding a consensus on an international instrument that would institutionalise the application of copyright exemptions to online content and the open access to public domain information represented a major stumbling block for this priority. Most of these provisions were potentially adverse to US interests and, therefore, welcomed neither by UNESCO’s highest management level nor by those member states and national delegations that equally prioritised the return of the United States over other political and programme-related goals.

In addition to the draft recommendation being potentially detrimental to the economic interests, the situation between UNESCO and the United States was also intensified by the organisation’s past in the field of communication and information. And indeed, the US government did not shy away from reminding the Secretariat of the consequences that the NWICO debate from the 1970s and 1980s implied for the organisation. Fearing that the positions defended by the organisation in the proposed draft recommendation would once more represent a threat to the “free flow of information” and that they could be misinterpreted as an invitation for censorship and closed markets for information and communication, the US observer warned UNESCO of “getting embroiled in another international fracas which might further delay the re-joining of the USA”.<sup>437</sup>

While this clear warning did not fail to entail an immediate response by the UNESCO Secretariat, all amendments brought to the draft recommendation were not sufficient for overcoming the United States and other observers’ worry about UNESCO falling back

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<sup>435</sup> Letter sent by ADG/CI to the US Observer, CI/INF/BR/02/257, 15 November 2002 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>436</sup> Rivière, Personal interview; Yushkiavitshus, Personal interview.

<sup>437</sup> Email sent by CI/INF about the meeting of the US observer with ADG/CI, “USA briefing3, 25 September 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

into the old pitfall of ideological struggles over the value and distribution of information. Their criticism was also soon targeted at a particular UNESCO staff member, who they viewed as the source of the discourse related to free access, the public domain and the idea of information being a global common. This was, unsurprisingly, Philippe Quéau, the director of UNESCO's Information Society Division<sup>438</sup>, who was indeed the main driving force behind these ideas. Moreover, in defiance of all protests, Quéau continued publicly to defend his discourse on the information society, also outside the context of UNESCO. As an assiduous observer and writer, he had already published an important number of opinion statements and short articles in the second half of the 1990s, through which he introduced his vision of an information society, based on other aspects than solely economic ones. During the preparation of the recommendation, he increased public exposure to his ideas and published a monograph presenting the complex philosophical basis of his societal vision, in which the technological evolution and all political, economic and social decision are guided by the pursuit of the "global common good".<sup>439</sup> In addition, he also authored a number of articles published in French newspapers, such as *Le Monde* and *Le Monde Diplomatique*.<sup>440</sup> Without always making it fully explicit that these ideas were his own and that they did not represent the official position of UNESCO or its member states, he raised questions about the necessity of regulating globalisation processes and the soaring commercialisation of all online services.

Unsurprisingly, the CI/INF director's publishing activities, as well as his efforts to promote his position within UNESCO, caused constant unrest within the Secretariat since many of his ideas were considered as "anti-American" and "anti-commercial". The conflict reached its peak in 2002 when Quéau published an article in the journal *Development*, in which he explained once more his perspective on "how to ensure the necessary fundamental changes in political, social and economic processes that would allow people to participate fully in the new information and communication society".<sup>441</sup> In this text, he not only sketched an alternative vision of a global knowledge society, but

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<sup>438</sup> Recall that UNESCO's Division for Information and Informatics had been renamed Information Society Division in 2000.

<sup>439</sup> Philippe Quéau, *La planète des esprits: pour une politique du cyberspace* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2000).

<sup>440</sup> Philippe Quéau, "Offensive insidieuse contre le droit du public à l'information", *Le Monde Diplomatique* (February 1997): 26-27; Philippe Quéau, "Les termes inégaux des échanges électroniques", *Le Monde Diplomatique* (February 1999): 16; Philippe Quéau, "A qui appartiennent les connaissances?", *Le Monde Diplomatique* (January 2000): 6-7. Recall that Quéau's cooperation with *Le Monde Diplomatique* dated back as far as the first INFOethics conference, from which the journal reported. In addition, already in the 1970s and 1980s *Le Monde Diplomatique* had followed UNESCO's involvement in NWICO and published articles promoting and defending the ideas and motivations behind the developing countries' movement.

<sup>441</sup> Wendy Harcourt, ed., "In Search of a Democratic Information Age", *Development* 45, no. 4 (2002): 3f. See also Frau-Meigs, "Le retour des Etats-Unis à l'UNESCO", 871.

also called for innovative solutions to bridge the information gap, like global taxation systems, similar to the very controversial Tobin Tax for financial transactions.<sup>442</sup> In addition, other authors of the same issue, like-minded thinkers such as Cees Hamelink<sup>443</sup> and Roberto Savio<sup>444</sup>, defended related ideas, thereby drawing lines from the movement for a New World Information Order in the 1970s and taking up other contested concepts, such as the Right to Communicate.<sup>445</sup>

This collection of articles was considered by many critics as the final proof that Philippe Quéau and his epistemic community would revive political and ideological goals that the organisation had abandoned together with the NWICO debate in the 1980s. Giving in to the United States' and other observers' requests to release Quéau from his position as the director of UNESCO's Information and Informatics Division, UNESCO's Director-General eventually decided to appoint him as the head of UNESCO's field office in Moscow, Russia. In early 2003, he replaced him as head of CI/INF with the New Zealand legal expert Elisabeth Longworth, who had served as an expert for the INFOethics conference in 1998 and for the preparation of the draft recommendation on cyberspace, and was, therefore, familiar with the topics discussed. In addition, given her legal background and her more moderate personal position, her appointment helped to calm the contentions and to avert the risk of delaying the return of the United States to UNESCO.<sup>446</sup> And indeed, in October 2003 —with Quéau and his ideas now far away from UNESCO's Headquarters in Paris— the USA re-joined the organisation and the recommendation on cyberspace was adopted by consensus.

The task of unravelling all the details of the performative dimension of UNESCO's search for an international consensus on the ethical, economic and social questions of

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<sup>442</sup> Philippe Quéau, "Global Governance and Knowledge Societies", *Development* 45, no. 4 (2002): 12. The idea of a currency transaction tax, proposed by Nobel Prize Laureate James Tobin in 1972, was revived by the alter-globalisation movement during the second half of the 1990s, notably by the editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique*. He also proposed the foundation of an association for the introduction of this tax, named ATTAC (*Association for the taxation of financial transactions for the aid of citizens*), which developed into a leading activist organisation opposing economic globalisation based on neoliberal ideology.

<sup>443</sup> Cees Hamelink, "Social Development, Information and Knowledge: Whatever Happened to Communication?", *Development* 45, no. 4 (2002): 5-9.

<sup>444</sup> Roberto Savio, "Post-September 11th: New Concepts of Information", *Development* 45, no. 4 (2002): 17-22.

<sup>445</sup> Recall that the Right to Communication (r2c) had been extensively discussed during the NWICO period but had been abandoned by UNESCO together with all other NWICO-related ideas. See Alan McKenna, "The Right to Communicate – A Continuing Victim of Historic Links to NWICO and UNESCO?", in *From NWICO to WSIS: 30 Years of Communication Geopolitics - Actors and Flows, Structures and Divides*, ed. Divina Frau-Meigs et al. (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012), 93-106.

<sup>446</sup> The purely political decision of replacing Philippe Quéau at the head of the CI/INF Division in order to accommodate the complaints and demands of the United States had been mentioned by most of the interviewees, although, unsurprisingly, no proof of it can be found in the archival records.

cyberspace is a complex and difficult undertaking. Although an important amount of archival records from this third episode are available, the political nature of the debates makes it impossible to retrace all acting elements that influenced the preparation process of the recommendation. In addition to the described actors and practices, there were certainly many negotiations and bargains as well as many high-level exchanges and decisions to be accounted for which are not documented or traceable.

Nevertheless, it is possible to state that the episode was dominated by contentions between a limited number of member states and observers, most notably the United States and the publisher lobbies, as well as UNESCO's Sector for Communication and Information. With the recommendation on multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, the latter tried to inscribe ideas which were supported by the majority of member states but opposed by others, into an international instrument. In addition, due to procedural irregularities, internal conflicts and certainly also to a lack of coordination and consultation, the drafting of the instrument was also criticised by those member states that had endorsed its general discourse. Consequently, the recommendation's adoption was deferred several times and the debate around it became increasingly contentious. Given the diplomatic priority of the United States' return to UNESCO, the political tensions and bargaining eventually took the upper hand in the process and the substantial goals of the instrument were subordinated to economic and political interests. Despite all this, the recommendation was adopted in 2003, albeit in an alleviated version compared to its initial draft, and served as one of UNESCO's official contributions to WSIS in 2003. The argumentative exchanges of the drafting process, as well as the discursive elements that were removed from the document and those which made it into its final version, are analysed in more detail in the following, final sub-chapter, retracing the discursive dimension of this period.

### **3.3 Analysis of the discursive dimension: Negotiating a balance between values and interests**

The preparation of a non-binding international instrument on cyberspace represented UNESCO's attempt to find an international consensus on the ethical, societal and economic questions of the information society. Moreover, the instrument was to constitute the organisation's key policy statement on these questions and, as such, represent UNESCO's contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society, taking place in 2003 and 2005. Consequently, all involved actors recognised the

importance of the instrument and put considerable efforts into drafting, revising and negotiating its content and exact wording. Despite the fact that a non-binding instrument of UNESCO does not have a great impact on either national or international policy agendas, all actors were fully aware that every argument, principle or postulation inscribed in the recommendation would be part of UNESCO's official policy discourse; consequently, every subsequent text could draw on the recommendation's wording and both national and international policy-makers could potentially justify their actions by referring to the text and its consensus-based adoption by UNESCO's General Conference.

For exactly these reasons, the drafting process was of a very contentious nature, with all actors trying to translate their ideas and interests and inscribe them successfully in the document. As a result, the various drafts of the recommendation underwent an important development process: From the first version of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by the CI Sector in 2000, and the first draft of the recommendation's text itself to the version eventually adopted in 2003, the document was reduced from a lengthy and repetitive 36 page-text to a 7-page statement. While the first report included detailed descriptions of the background, purpose and underlying principles of the draft recommendation, the adopted version was narrowed down to a short preamble, 25 concrete measures and a list of definitions.

Yet, during this process not only were the length and detail of the text reduced; more importantly, its general tone, the scope of the proposed measures and, hence, the discourse inscribed in the recommendation, changed quite fundamentally. In order to retrace these changes, this last sub-chapter analyses the ideas inscribed<sup>447</sup> in the drafts and the final version of the recommendation as well as the arguments and discursive exchanges causing the various amendments and reformulations. Yet, not all parts of the draft recommendation caused the same kind of contentions and disagreements. The four sections of the recommendation related to different dimensions of universal access and proposed different ways of reaching this overarching goal. Thus, the understanding of universal access underlying the recommendation was very broad, incorporating different sets of policy problems, all geared towards the overall objective of contributing to a fairer and more equitable information society on a global scale:

“What should be the new ‘universal access’ paradigm? Should it be only based on physical access? Should it include fair telecommunications tariff policies, including adequate subsidization of certain classes of users? Or should it also include free access to certain ‘contents’, for instance access to all public domain

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<sup>447</sup> Recall that, in ANT-tradition, “inscription” refers to the efforts of an actor to fix an alignment of interests in a stable way, for example through a written text or agreement, or in an organisational setting like the creation of a certain procedure or a project.

data and governmental information relevant to citizens imbued with their duty of being well informed on all affairs of state and eager to enforce democracy? What should be the minimum level of service for users? Is it possible to cost obligations to the public service mission in a meaningful way? What should be the ‘consumer’s rights’? Are these rights interfering with the ‘citizen’s rights’, if they are limited by the interest of the ‘market’?”<sup>448</sup>

In order to cover the full range of topics addressed by the recommendation, the analysis of the discursive dimension is divided into four parts, each dedicated to one of the sections of the recommendation:

- (1) Universal access and the promotion of multilingualism
- (2) Universal access to networks and services
- (3) Universal access and the public domain
- (4) Universal access and intellectual property rights

As in the previous chapters, each of these aspects can be considered an emblematic issue for a broader set of problems. And indeed, most of them have already been identified during the discursive analysis of the two previous episodes of UNESCO’s policy response to the information society. For this reason, the analysis presented here focuses less on the complex of problems behind the emblematic issue but on the discursive struggles encountered during the recommendation’s drafting process. Hence, the analysis consisted in comparing the drafts with the final version of the recommendation and assessing how, due to the comments made by member states and observers and the amendments proposed by the CI Sector and the involved experts, certain actors successfully “translated” their ideas and interests and inscribed them in the final recommendation text.<sup>449</sup> Accordingly, the discourse analysis does not summarise all discursive exchanges of this third episode; instead, priority is given to identifying competing storylines about the

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<sup>448</sup> Philippe Quéau, “The Information Society and the Global Good”, speech at the RINSCAP RINSEP Meeting, Bali, 22-27 March 1999, (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). A surprisingly low number of member states criticised this lack of a precise definition of universal access in the early drafts, with some exceptions such as, for instance, Sweden: “Universal access to cyberspace is not given a clear definition in the consultation. If the next session of the General Conference shall discuss a draft recommendation on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, all concepts must be given a clear definition.” Comment submitted by Sweden to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 28 May 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>449</sup> Recall that, drawing on ANT, translations are defined as processes of negotiation, persuasion and argumentation through which actors construct common definitions and meanings and mobilise others to share their idea and to align their interests.



same issue and to the institutionalisation of policy discourse through the inscription of these storylines into the recommendation.<sup>450</sup>

The argumentative discourse analysis of this episode is based on all available documentation reflecting the drafting process for the recommendation. This includes the proceedings and summaries of UNESCO's Executive Board and General Conference sessions, all documentation of the two expert groups (official documents, emails and handwritten minutes), correspondence within the UNESCO Secretariat and between the Secretariat and member states or observers, as well as all comments submitted to the two consultation processes carried out among UNESCO's member states and official observers. Most importantly, the discourse analysis also included seven draft versions of the recommendation and its eventually adopted text (see also Appendix n. 3, "Selected UNESCO documents").

In total, more than 140 documents have been screened for valuable arguments and input, of which 59 were eventually coded using the Dedoose software and resulted in 262 text excerpts categorised by 13 different codes.<sup>451</sup> In addition, the draft versions of the preliminary report on the recommendation and the draft versions of the recommendation itself were analysed and compared manually in order to assess how the documents changed in form and content and how some discursive elements were deleted, inserted or amended during the drafting process.

### **Universal access and the promotion of multilingualism**

The first dimension of universal access treated by the final recommendation was the problem of linguistic diversity. The focus on multilingualism in cyberspace was clearly influenced by UNESCO's general policy discourse on cultural diversity. Moreover, it constituted a counterbalance to some of the more controversial issues covered by the recommendation. While it was not possible to prove whether the integration of multilingualism into the recommendation's scope was a deliberate strategic move to overcome the resistance of a few member states, it did certainly contribute to it. Indeed,

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<sup>450</sup> Recall that, in ADA, "discourse institutionalisation" occurs if a discourse solidifies in particular institutional arrangements.

<sup>451</sup> In order to reduce the number of coded text excerpts, only the comments and arguments that were directly related to the four categories of universal access covered by the recommendation were imported into Dedoose. All additional suggestions and ideas of member states, which went beyond the scope of the recommendation, were not taken into consideration since they did not have any influence on the text and, consequently, did not impact UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society.

from all sets of problems discussed, multilingualism was unquestionably the least controversial one. Two reasons can be found for this: First, member states were positively influenced by the fact that there was already a general agreement on the importance of cultural diversity within UNESCO and, hence, also on the importance of the more specific issue of linguistic diversity. Secondly, linguistic diversity—or the lack thereof—was considered a problem that can be measured in an objective manner. Consequently, nobody questioned the underlying problem that, in these early days of the Internet, the great majority of available websites were in English while many other languages, in particular those that are only spoken regionally or by minorities were not yet present at all. Considering the balanced representation of languages on cyberspace to be one of the ethical questions posed by the rising importance of the Internet, the subject had also been discussed at the INFOethics conferences, where the topic was also amongst the least controversial ones. At the same time, this very positive response of member states to the topic of multilingualism can be surprising when considering that it was part of the emblematic issues representing the complex of problems related to economic, social and cultural globalisation processes and their relation to the expanding information and communication infrastructures, which was a controversial subject within UNESCO. This becomes clear when looking at the discourse on multilingualism since it was proposed by CI/INF in the first drafts of the preliminary report for the recommendation.

### *1. Proposition of the problem to be regulated*

Although multilingualism was added to UNESCO's discourse on cyberspace later than most other topics, its inclusion was not an artificial one. Instead, the CI Sector was able to integrate it into the overall discourse on universal access by describing multilingual content as a condition for access:

“Considering that personal, community and national opinions and particular identities are best expressed through their own languages (or mother tongues) all should have at their disposal the means necessary to ensure the transmission of and access to information in their native language. Therefore, any recommendation on worldwide access to the Internet must deal with the issue of the language of cyberspace. Promoting the presence and use of, and training in, various languages on the Internet is essential for ensuring universal access to and

local production of information and knowledge, and the participation of all in the global information society.”<sup>452</sup>

It becomes clear from the principles proposed in the first draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation that the question of multilingualism was mainly, but not exclusively, seen as a problem related to the differences existing between information-rich and information-poor countries. Consequently, it can be viewed as an epistemic issue representing the large complex of problems caused by globalisation processes leading to a world that is increasingly dominated by interconnected capital markets and technological networks, an issue whose translation into policy discourse was discussed during the INFOethics conference. In the early drafts of the recommendation, it is possible to find a combination of two storylines identified for this issue in the first empirical chapter, which differed regarding their underlying assumptions but were in many ways compatible.

First of all, the proposition of the problem to be regulated in the first draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation seemed to be inspired mainly by a negative, or even alarmist storyline on the situation of linguistic diversity in the digital age, warning about the risk of cultural domination. It was based on a narrative that only emphasises the perils that the Internet represents for linguistic diversity, with the dominance of English in cyberspace leading to discrimination against all other language groups and representing a danger for all kind of cultural, social and intellectual exchange:

“It is partly for historical reasons that the Internet had developed as a communication tool for the researchers in science and technology whose common language is English. [...] English still remains the dominant language if one wishes to look at Web sites worldwide or send mails across state borders. There is a risk that this will lead to the decline of other languages and to a globalization founded on the hegemony of, and English-based, single culture spreading all over the world.”<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 30 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). This first draft version was not approved by the ADG/CII and consequently never distributed outside the CII/INF Division.

<sup>453</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 31 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). This storyline was also expressed by Iceland, which had already during the INFOethics conferences called for a strong and pro-active protection of multilingualism online, and reiterated these calls in their comments to the consultation processes of the recommendation: “The question of multilingualism on the Internet is not a separate issue but closely connected to the question of access. [...] [I]t is of great importance to promote different languages on all possible occasions to resist the dominance of the language of those who fabric the new tools and control the market.” Comment submitted by Iceland to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 29 January 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

Part of this storyline was also the claim that the unequal representation of languages would be reinforced by structural socio-economic inequalities that were independent from the informational environment. Instead of contributing to overcoming these inequalities, the spread of the Internet and the increasing pervasiveness of digital technology in all spheres of life would only aggravate them.

## *2. Protecting and promoting multilingualism in cyberspace*

The second storyline visible in early drafts was based on a more constructive perspective. While the proposition of the problem to be regulated was characterised by an alarmist tone, the measures proposed in the early drafts of the recommendation focused on promoting linguistic diversity through changes and improvements in the informational field. They were built on the narrative that, in order to protect and promote multilingualism and diversity online, non-English speaking users needed to be enabled to actively take part in the online world and to produce and translate content in their local languages.

Consequently, these measures mainly aimed at counterbalancing the predominance of English content and software through three sets of solutions: (1) the development of technological tools, (2) the creation of contents in different languages, and (3) financial incentives and support for the development of multilingual tools and content.

Of these measures, those which received the most attention and encouragement from member states during the consultation processes were the ones that proposed the development of new technological tools. Focusing on technical solutions, most countries, even the less technologically advanced ones, could relate to and recognise the usefulness of these measures, which were the most concrete and, in many ways, also most achievable ones:

“Encourage participation of all Member States’ experts in research and development of Web browsers and search engines with extensive multilingual capabilities, on-line dictionaries and other on-line multilingual tools that will enhance on-line translation capabilities and inter-operability. [...] Support global academic efforts to develop automated translation services, accessible to all free or at a nominal charge and to encourage the development of intelligent linguistic systems.”<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> UNESCO, “Preliminary report on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, included in a letter sent by UNESCO’s Director-General to all member states, CL/3569, 15 December 2000, 7 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). See for example the comment

But aside from encouraging technological solutions, several member states expressed scepticism regarding the practicality of other measures and their ability to effectively influence the representation of languages on the Internet. They thereby expressed a perspective that had been identified in the analysis of the INFOethics debates as a third storyline, expressing the most unconcerned view on multilingualism and the information gap. Unlike the storyline warning about the threats of cultural domination, this one contended that the problem of multilingualism would solve itself thanks to the Internet growth and the increasing diversity of users and usages. Consequently, instead of viewing multilingualism as a precondition for universal access, this storyline considered access as a precondition for diversity. If policy-makers only concentrated on providing access to the Internet, the linguistic diversity of content and tools would follow — so the narrative:

“Linguistic and cultural diversity can only be achieved when the principle of universal access —to be understood both as the right to access to the information and communication resources and the right to present and make available the local/regional knowledge and cultural heritage in the global networks— is fully acknowledged by all members of the international community. Besides the application of tools like advanced translation engines it seems to be difficult however to further encourage the use of more languages or even minority languages on the internet. UNESCO’s role should be to sensitize and raise awareness to the fact that cultural diversity should include the promotion of the use of multilingualism.”<sup>455</sup>

Although it did not argue against the promotion of multilingualism, this storyline was quite different from the ones present in the early recommendation’s drafts. Thus, it contributed to extenuating those measures which demanded vigorous interventions by governments, such as providing financial support for developing translation tools and other technological solutions, which were included in earlier draft versions but later disappeared from the text.<sup>456</sup>

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provided by Romania: “The draft recommendation document should take explicit reference to the technological aspects and difficulties of the language(s) informatisation process and propose measures [...] to overcome them.” Comment submitted by Romania to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, no date (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>455</sup> Comment submitted by the German delegation to UNESCO to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 16 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>456</sup> One of the measures deleted during the early drafting process was, for example, the request for tax subsidies or grants: “Prevent all forms of linguistic segregation in access to cultural and scientific information and knowledge. Assistance along with provisions of financial resources should be developed at all these levels to ensure the presence of national and multilingual Web sites, for example through tax rebates, subsidies, research grants or prizes.” UNESCO, “Preliminary report on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, included in a letter sent by UNESCO’s Director-General to all member states, CL/3569, 15 December 2000, 8 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

### *3. Multilingualism and the balance of interests*

In addition to member states questioning the possibility of positively influencing multilingualism online, others went even further in their criticism and warned about the negative impact of respective measures. Together, these comments formed a fourth storyline on the topic of multilingualism, which had not yet been present during the INFOethics debates on the subject. It consisted in the view that exceedingly far-reaching measures for the protection and promotion of multilingualism could be misinterpreted as an excessively strong interference in the information economy.

There were mainly two arguments supporting this storyline:

First, some comments of member states and observers warned about the risk that the promotion and protection of linguistic diversity could be used as a pretext for intervening in national information economies and restricting the use of certain languages and technological tools. And as a matter of fact, some of the proposals by member states did go in this direction by demanding, for instance, that the import of software in foreign languages should be discouraged.<sup>457</sup> Turning on these proposals, others claimed that this kind of provisions would not be part of UNESCO's mandate:

“The final text of the recommendation/declaration should point out that it must not be misinterpreted as a means for supporting specific languages or for hindering the development of any predominant language such as English. Measures for the promotion of specific languages are subject to national activities and do not lie in UNESCO's fields of competence.”<sup>458</sup>

As a result, all references to specific languages or to the predominant representation of one language and culture in cyberspace were deleted from the draft documents.

The second argument conveying the worry that measures for the promotion of multilingualism could result in undesirable interference in the information economy expressed the concern that “the Draft Recommendation ignores the fact that strong IPRs and intellectual property laws are the best way to foster multilingualism and the dissemination of creative works.”<sup>459</sup> It claimed that the proposed measures for fostering

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<sup>457</sup> This was proposed by the National Commission of the Republic of Congo: “Il en va de même de dispositions tendant à décourager l'importation des logiciels en d'autres langues que celle pratiquée dans les pays utilisateurs.” Comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 8 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>458</sup> Comment submitted by the German delegation to UNESCO to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 16 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>459</sup> Position paper of IPA and STM regarding UNESCO's draft recommendation, included in email sent by Bonnie Richardson, Vice President of MPAA, to Shirley Hart, US observer at UNESCO, “FW:

automated translation services would not only impinge upon the rights of authors but also be counterproductive to the objective of linguistic diversity:

“[Some measures] envisage the abridgement of the translation right in the electronic world — a right recognised as an exclusive author’s right in the Berne Convention. The translation right incentivises the creation of translations and, in this sense, promotes multilingualism. Indeed publishers and authors are directly responsible for maintaining a rich heritage of over 2500 languages and for making texts created in one language accessible in others. However, it is the exclusive right of the author to control the authenticity of his or her work and to choose if and how a work is translated. [...] Hence, whilst agreeing with the aims of promoting multilingualism, we must insist that translation of texts, whether automated or otherwise provided remains subject to the rights and interests of the author of the original text.”<sup>460</sup>

Exclusively expressed by the publisher associations involved in the consultation processes, this argument was influenced by their overall concern with the draft recommendation’s provision regarding copyright protection. But since they were the only actors to voice this concern with regard to the provisions on multilingualism, their comments did not result in the deletion of all measures on the development of automated translation tools. Instead, an acknowledgment of the “right of translation” was added to the respective paragraph in the final recommendation text:

“Member States, international organizations and information and communication technology industries [...] should support international cooperative efforts with regard to automated translation services accessible to all, as well as intelligent linguistic systems such as those performing multilingual information retrieval, summarizing/abstracting and speech understanding, *while fully respecting the right of translation of authors* [emphasis added].”<sup>461</sup>

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UNESCO, draft resolution, 15 Oct – 3 Nov 2001, Paris”, 21 September 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>460</sup> Letter sent by Lavizzari, Legal Counsel of IPA, to del Corral, 26 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>461</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003, 2 (UNESDOC).

#### *4. Discourse inscribed in the final recommendation*

Despite the low degree of disagreement that member states showed with regard to the provisions for the promotion of multilingualism, the few points of criticism that were expressed were surprisingly influential. Indeed, while the substance of most measures proposed in the first drafts made it into the final document, the general discourse of the section on multilingualism changed. Instead of warning of the predominance of English in cyberspace leading to a general situation of cultural hegemony, the final recommendation mainly followed the more balanced storyline that was equally already present in the early documents. In summary, the measures inscribed in the recommendation therefore called on member states to:

- Encourage the creation and access to “educational, cultural and scientific content in digital form”;
- Encourage capacity-building for the “production of local and indigenous content”;
- Formulate national policies on “language survival in cyberspace” and the teaching of language;
- Encourage the development of technological tools “with extensive multilingual capabilities”, including translation services.

All these measures focused on overcoming language barriers and the unequal representation of linguistic diversity through changes in the informational environment itself and did not tackle overarching socio-economic imbalances reinforcing the existing problems related to linguistic diversity in cyberspace. Moreover, in response to the few critical comments received, all references to economic forces and their potentially counterproductive influence on the protection of multilingualism were gradually deleted from the drafts. This was also the case for all expressions that could potentially be misinterpreted as an invitation to member states to intervene in national information economies or the international market for software and other digital technology. For instance, the idea that newly developed search engines and web browsers with multilingual capabilities should “preferably be developed and made available in an open source environment”, which was added to the draft recommendation during the revision process, was deleted from the last version of the text.<sup>462</sup>

The following figure illustrates the four storylines that contributed to the discourse included in the section of the recommendation on multilingualism and shows how they influenced the final version of the text:

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<sup>462</sup> Draft recommendation included in UNESCO, 31 C/25 Corr.2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001, 8 (UNESDOC).



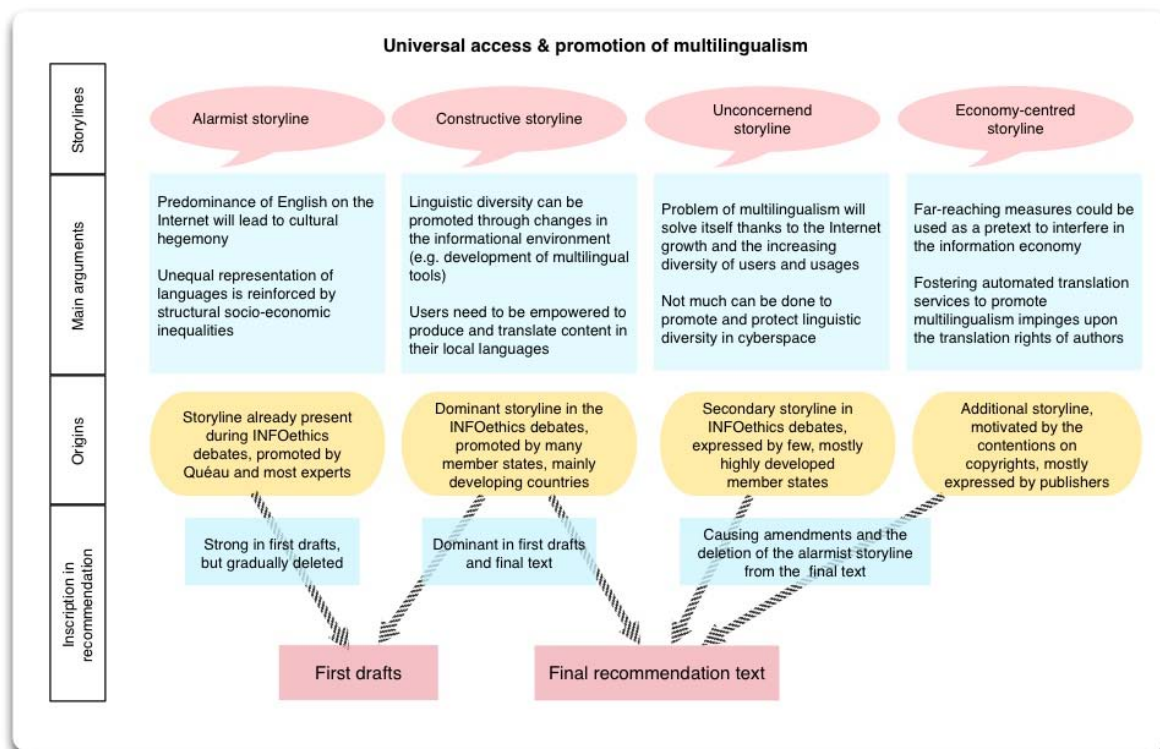


Figure 21: Discourse on universal access and the promotion of multilingualism

## Universal access to networks and services

Besides linguistic diversity on the Internet, the second least controversial topic covered by the recommendation was the question of universal access to networks and services, albeit a rather unusual topic for UNESCO. During the creation of IFAP, the organisation had taken the deliberate decision to set its focus on the content-related questions of “infrastructure” rather than on the technical matters related to “infra-structure”. Consequently, the decision to include issues of physical access to networks into the organisation’s key position statement about the Internet was a rather surprising shift from the existing discourse.

Nevertheless, the first drafts of the recommendation took a particular perspective on the question of physical access, which justified its inclusion. In line with its overall discourse of information being a public good, the CI/INF Division inscribed in the early drafts the idea that access to the Internet should be considered a human right and that providing universal access should be a public service which needs to be promoted and supported by public authorities. Based on these two fundamental claims, the section of the recommendation on access to networks and services also made a proposal regarding the technical management of Internet infrastructures and the price regulation of Internet

access. And although these policy problems were not directly related to UNESCO's cultural and intellectual mandate, their inclusion in the recommendation was in line with the organisation's past activities in the field of technical assistance and of its former information programmes such as UNISIST. Moreover, they had also been part of the overall debate on the digital divide and the gap between "information rich" and "information poor" during the INFOethics conferences and the creation of IFAP. Consequently, the principles and measures of the draft recommendation's respective section were supported by the majority of the developing countries among UNESCO's member states, which felt particularly concerned by the problem of the information gap. At the same time, —and rather unsurprisingly— they were criticised by those countries which felt that technical questions were not part of UNESCO's competences and should be dealt with by ITU. And although the section on access did not attract as much critical attention as other sections of the recommendation, many member states also felt that UNESCO was overstepping its competence by discussing new human rights. The competing storylines on these points become clearer when looking at the arguments proposed by CI/INF in the first drafts, the different opinions expressed during the consultation processes and the discourse eventually inscribed in the final recommendation text.

### *1. Proposition of the problem to be regulated*

Just like the section on multilingualism, the early drafts of the section of the recommendation on access to networks and services were marked by two different storylines which, despite not being directly opposed to one another, differed in terms of the way they framed the problem to be regulated: On the one hand, the early drafts were clearly influenced by the same alarmist storyline also visible in the section on multilingualism, which feared that the technological progress would not improve but deteriorate the situation of the developing world due to the lack of access to information. On the other hand, most of the initially proposed measures followed a more constructive storyline, in which the information gap was regarded as a quantitative problem that could be overcome by improving and augmenting the access to the Internet in developing countries.

The initial description of the policy problem was mainly based on the first storyline, which had already been identified as a dominant storyline during the INFOethics debates. Both the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared in early 2000, and most

texts that the CI/INF Division used as input for the report<sup>463</sup>, were marked by an alarmist and rather pessimistic tone, warning that the existing socio-economic inequalities between countries that were “information rich” and those that were “information poor” would not diminish as a result of the Internet. Instead, these inequalities would only become greater, especially if no measures were taken to fundamentally change the underlying structural imbalances. This discourse was inscribed in the early drafts based on three interrelated arguments:

First, regarding the technological level, it was claimed that the imbalances were due to the history of the Internet as an infrastructure developed first and foremost in the United States, leading to a situation in which other countries were technologically dependent on and subordinated to others:

“The historical development of the Internet, and subsequent economic incentives and opportunities, have led to a situation in which the backbone infrastructure is concentrated in the industrialized countries and particularly in the USA, leading to the preponderance of a very few major providers, and distortion of traffic and costs for networks in other countries [...]. Two corollaries are: i) this situation has aggravated the difficulties in developing strong regional Internet backbones and, in the case of certain developing countries, even in developing national backbones and peering arrangements, and ii) in some sense users and ISPs [Internet Service Providers] outside of the United States are subsidizing Internet users and ISPs in the USA.”<sup>464</sup>

Secondly, regarding the commercial level, it was argued that the globalised telecommunication economy, empowered by liberalised market-forces and international economic policies, would work against the interests of developing countries and their hopes for a more equal information society:

“Although there are many obstacles to universal access to telematics networks and services, [...] economic constraints are proving to be particularly important, whether directly or indirectly in combination with other factors. Many of these constraints relate to the increasing trends towards international competition and free trade, which while responding to the imperatives of economic development, are reinforcing the roles of global multinational enterprises and economic alliances.”<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> These input texts were taken from earlier statements of the sector, articles written by Quéau and the four expert reports prepared for the last INFOethics conference. They were edited and shortened by Quéau and his team before being partially integrated in the preliminary text. See email correspondence of the CI/INF Division, May–August 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>464</sup> Email sent by CI/INF to George Dupont, “Internet Access meeting”, 16 June 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>465</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 14f (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

Thirdly, part of this argument was also that in many “info-poor” countries, the Internet was considered a purely commercial medium, leading to a lack of interest and initiative by public authorities to promote the public access to Internet infrastructure in their countries and creating financial hurdles for public service institutions and users to access the Internet:

“Public service institutions –such as universities, research centers, libraries, museums, NGOs and government agencies– which are by their very nature essential actors in innovation and capacity building for the information society, are facing considerable difficulties in participating in the information revolution in many developing countries because of economic and regulatory obstacles, particular where the Internet has been developed solely on a commercial basis. As opposed to the situation in the industrialized countries where the original ‘raison d’être’ for the Internet was service to and by the academic and research communities in the public interest, regulatory practice and economic reality in many developing countries are often taking account mainly of the commercial Internet, and do not sufficiently encourage the development of complementary public services, not-for-profit access to the Internet [...].”<sup>466</sup>

Based on these arguments, developed in great detail in the preliminary report on the recommendation, the early drafts proposed a number of measures that called on governments and national public authorities to assume the responsibility for providing access to the Internet. Interestingly, as for the issue of multilingualism, many of the proposed measures represented a slightly different discourse compared to the description of the problem to be regulated: instead of tackling the economic structures causing the imbalance between info-rich and info-poor, they aimed at bridging the gap between them. This becomes clear when looking more closely at the provisions proposed by CI/INF and the different comments of member states during the consultation processes.

## *2. Internet as a public service and a human right?*

Building on the arguments inscribed in the preliminary report on the recommendation, the key measures proposed in the recommendation’s early drafts were arranged around the postulation that universal access to the Internet should be considered as a public service:

“The internet should be considered as a public utility service in the same way as basic telecommunication services, water, and electricity.”<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid., 5.

or

“The Internet should be considered by governments and international organizations as a public service utility service and not only as a ‘commercial product’.”<sup>468</sup>

This proposal had already been discussed in detail during the INFOethics conferences and was fully in line with the idea that governments and public authorities should assume the responsibility for providing access to digital networks and services. But the initially proposed measures went even beyond this by adding a second claim, which had also already been alluded to in the other two episodes of UNESCO’s policy discourse analysed in this thesis but was formulated in an explicit manner for the first time in the recommendation’s drafts. Several early draft versions include the demand for access to the Internet to be considered a human right:

“The international community should recognize and support the *concept of universal access to telematics networks and services as a basic human right* [emphasis in original].”<sup>469</sup>

Both of these proposals are an interesting addition to UNESCO’s discourse on the information society from which the topic of physical access to networks had deliberately been excluded, until this moment. By comparing the access to the Internet with the access to other public services, the proposed measures added to the understanding of “universal access” as it was referred to in the recommendation: a publicly provided basic service that needs to be accessible to all citizens in a country, disregarding their location, educational level and social or physical condition.

At the same time, by giving priority to physical access to the technical infrastructure, these measures expressed a storyline which had been identified in the discursive analysis of the INFOethics debates as representing a simplistic view on the problem of the digital divide. Indeed, it seemed to consider the information gap as a quantitative problem that could be overcome by increasing Internet access in the developing world. Part of its narrative was

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<sup>468</sup> Draft recommendation included in UNESCO, 31 C/25 Corr.2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001, 6 (UNESDOC). Part of this measure was that the concept of public service Internet providers, in addition to commercial providers, should be better promoted in the developing world: “The concept of a public service ISP [...], which was essential in leading Internet use in the public service sectors in the industrialised countries, is often not (or not sufficiently) recognised or promoted in developing countries, which has contributed to the unaffordability and inaccessibility of the Internet to many public service users in the latter countries.” Email sent by CI/INF to George Dupont, “Internet Access meeting”, 16 June 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>469</sup> UNESCO, “Preliminary report on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, included in a letter sent by UNESCO’s Director-General to all member states, CL/3569, 15 December 2000, 5 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

that access to the Internet would automatically lead to more access to information and, eventually, to more equity. Hence, it did not pay attention to the socio-economic, cultural or educational conditions of the Internet users or propose ways to influence them.

Surprisingly, none of the comments by member states and observers regarding this section seemed to question this “simplistic” storyline. Instead, the measures attracted positive and encouraging comments by some member states, mainly by those belonging to the former Communist bloc, for example by Poland:

“Traiter l’Internet comme service public dans les politiques nationales et sur le plan global serait une mesure très importante de favoriser l’accès du public à ce réseau dans beaucoup de pays. C’est d’autant plus important que l’Internet devient un facteur essentiel du développement civilisationnel des pays et des régions. La comparaison établie dans le rapport préliminaire entre ce service et les services collectifs comme la télécommunication de base, l’électricité et l’eau est, dans ce sens, tout à fait justifiée.”<sup>470</sup>

At the same time, there were also critical voices. On the one hand, some highly developed Western countries, such as Germany, France and Canada warned about the proposition of new human rights and the consequences of declaring universal access as a public service utility:

“UNESCO should refrain from establishing new ‘basic human’ or other ‘rights’ (M4, M23). Existing international human rights should be quoted in their original wording and should not be reformulated.”<sup>471</sup>

On the other hand, several developing countries expressed critical comments that were motivated by an entirely different reason, namely the (in)capacity of these countries to provide a public Internet service due to a lack of resources and/or infrastructures:

“La première mesure souligne la prépondérance de l’effort endogène, particulièrement au niveau de décideurs pour que l’Internet soit considéré comme un service public, au même titre que les télécommunications de base, l’eau ou l’électricité. [...] Le problème c’est qu’il existe des pays où les services

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<sup>470</sup> Comment submitted by Poland to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 21 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). Similar consent was expressed by Romania: “While universal access to the knowledge and information on the cyberspace is definitely an issue that should go together with the human rights, it would be highly desirable that a minimal public services for the citizens would be ensured by their governments as soon as possible.” Comment submitted to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, no date (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>471</sup> Comment submitted by the German delegation to UNESCO to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 16 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

publics ci-haut cités sont inopérants. Les décideurs y sont confrontés à des choix difficiles face à l'ampleur des besoins et la modicité des ressources."<sup>472</sup>

In response to these points of criticism, the calls for declaring universal access to the Internet as a public service or a new human right were considerably softened in later drafts. In the end, while the respective paragraphs still figured amongst the other measures in the final recommendation text, they no longer contained the original postulations:

“Member states and international organizations should recognize and support universal access to the Internet as an instrument for promoting the realization of the human rights as defined in Article 19 and 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights”<sup>473</sup>,

and

“Member States and international organizations should promote the access to the Internet as a service of public interest through the adoption of appropriate policies in order to enhance the process of empowering citizenship and civil society, and by encouraging proper implementation of, and support to, such policies in developing countries.”<sup>474</sup>

### *3. Financing the Internet as a public service utility*

Building on the abstract provisions of declaring Internet access a public service utility or a new human right, the second main block of measures proposed in the early draft versions concerned the price regulation for Internet access. Addressing more practical questions of Internet access provisions, these provisions expressed the idea that it was the responsibility of public authorities to intervene in the information economy on the national and international level in order to guarantee access to networks and services,

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<sup>472</sup> Comment submitted by the National Commission of Congo to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 8 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). A similar comment was made by Indonesia during the debates at the General Conference in 2001: “[U]niversal access requires telematics infrastructures that are lacking or insufficient in underdeveloped countries. Hence, achieving the effect desired in the resolution can be utterly costly for these countries.” Summary document “Debate on the Draft Recommendation”, no document code, 31 October 2001 (consulted before archiving, no UA code).

<sup>473</sup> In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 concerns freedom of opinion and expression, while Article 27 concerns people’s right freely to participate in the cultural life of their community, and the right to the protection of interests resulting from their own scientific, literary or artistic productions.

<sup>474</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003, 2f (UNESDOC).

either for free or at a fair cost.<sup>475</sup> It thereby also followed the second storyline identified above, which reduced the information gap to a quantitative problem. Consequently, the respective measures mainly proposed ways of subsidising universal access to Internet services and networks:

First, for the international level, some provisions included in early drafts proposed to bridge the global information gap by reducing the disproportionately high costs for network access in the developing world:

“On the principle of international solidarity, interconnection on a fair cost-sharing basis should be encouraged between national Internet peering points in developing countries [...] and peering points in other countries (whether developing or industrialized).”<sup>476</sup>

Secondly, focusing on access on the national level, other measures suggested introducing financial support for Internet access in public service institutions in order to allow citizens to access and use Internet services for free or at a highly reduced cost via these institutions:

“Mechanisms should be established to provide the cross-subsidization of telecommunication and Internet access costs necessary to ensure universal access to the Internet and its multilingual contents, with special consideration for the needs of public service institutions. [...] National regulatory authorities could assist this effort by establishing *concessionary rates for Internet access in public service institutions* such as schools, academic organizations and public libraries. Reductions in taxes and customs duties on informatics and network equipment may also be considered [emphasis in original].”<sup>477</sup>

While the same group of formerly communist member states welcomed these proposals<sup>478</sup>, most highly developed Western governments responded less positively. Following the storyline that had been identified in the section on multilingualism, these countries were concerned that many of the measures for reducing the costs of Internet

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<sup>475</sup> The question of price regulation and the digital divide was one of the reasons for ITU to host WSIS and also one of the most prominent debates during the summit. It is therefore not surprising that the topic was also discussed at UNESCO in the years preceding the summit, though from a different perspective.

<sup>476</sup> Draft recommendation included in UNESCO, 31 C/25 Corr.2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001, 7 (UNESDOC).

<sup>477</sup> UNESCO, “Preliminary report on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, included in a letter sent by UNESCO’s Director-General to all member states, CL/3569, 15 December 2000, 5 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). See also Appendix n. 3, “Selected UNESCO documents”.

<sup>478</sup> For instance, these ideas were once more supported by Romania’s comment to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, no date (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).



access would represent an invalid interference in the information economy. They opposed the idea that national authorities should be concerned with price regulations for Internet access provision. Instead, they saw this as a question to be regulated by the market, in cooperation with all interested parties, while governments should only hold an overseeing function, to guarantee fair competition. Hence, they argued that by inscribing the initially proposed measures into an internationally adopted instrument, UNESCO would interfere with national competences and overstep its mandate:

“UNESCO should not deal with price regulations. [...] Negotiations on prices and agreements for access to Internet should be based on business as like conditions, negotiated by the parties. A model of state regulations can hardly exist on markets exposed to competition and may become an obstacle to expansion of infrastructures based on market initiatives, which is now taking place in many countries. The role of governments should be to supervise, so that the competition is not distorted or that other market as problems evolve.”<sup>479</sup>

In response to these complaints, the measures demanding vigorous interventions by governments were once more extenuated in later draft version, for example by proposing instead “new models for public-private partnerships for financing and providing incentives” for access.<sup>480</sup> Moreover, instead of calling on governments to assume the responsibility for providing low-cost access to Internet service, in particular for public service institutions, their role was now simply to act as an intermediary and “encourage” ISPs and other telecommunication actors to negotiate fair prices and implement the respective provisions:

“Member States should encourage Internet Service providers (ISPs) to consider provision of concessionary rates for Internet access in public service institutions, [...], a transitional measure towards universal access to cyberspace”,  
and

“Interconnection on a negotiated cost-sharing basis in the spirit of international cooperation should be encouraged between national Internet peering points [...]”<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Comment submitted by Sweden to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 14 May 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>480</sup> Draft recommendation included in UNESCO, 31 C/25 Corr.2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001, 6 (UNESDOC).

<sup>481</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003, 3 (UNESDOC).

#### *4. Discourse inscribed in the final recommendation*

As for the section about multilingualism, the comparatively few points of criticism that member states expressed with regard to the section on universal access to services were surprisingly influential. Hence, while the substance of most measures proposed in the first drafts was preserved until the final document, the general tone of the discourse changed. Instead of warning that the gap between “information rich” and “information poor” countries would deteriorate if no measures were taken to tackle the fundamental economic discrimination and technological dependence of developing countries, the final recommendation document mainly followed the storyline that simply aimed at improving the access of those currently excluded. In summary, the measures inscribed in the recommendation called on member states to:

- Adopt policies that promote access to the Internet to “enhance the process of empowering citizenship and civil society”;
- Establish mechanisms to “facilitate universal access to the Internet through affordable telecommunications and Internet costs” with special considerations given to public institutions;
- Encourage the development of strategies and models that “facilitate community access and reach out to all levels of society”;
- Encourage the cooperation between national Internet peering points and the establishment of inter- and intra-regional networks in order to “connect each country within a global network in an open competitive environment”.

By and large, the recommendation’s measures on access to networks and services integrated the idea that open competition would foster Internet connectivity in the developing world, but remained vague regarding the concrete provisions that member states should take. In addition, neither the idea of declaring Internet access as a public service utility or as a human right, nor any of the suggestions of overcoming financial barriers through vigorous governmental interventions were reflected in the adopted recommendation text. With this change, the section also lost the particular focus that the CI/INF had set with its focus on public authorities and utilities, and that in some way justified UNESCO’s reasons for dealing with the technical and financial questions related to infrastructure and physical access.

The following figure visualises the three main storylines that contributed to the discourse included in the section of the recommendation on access to networks and services and illustrates how they influenced the final version of the text:

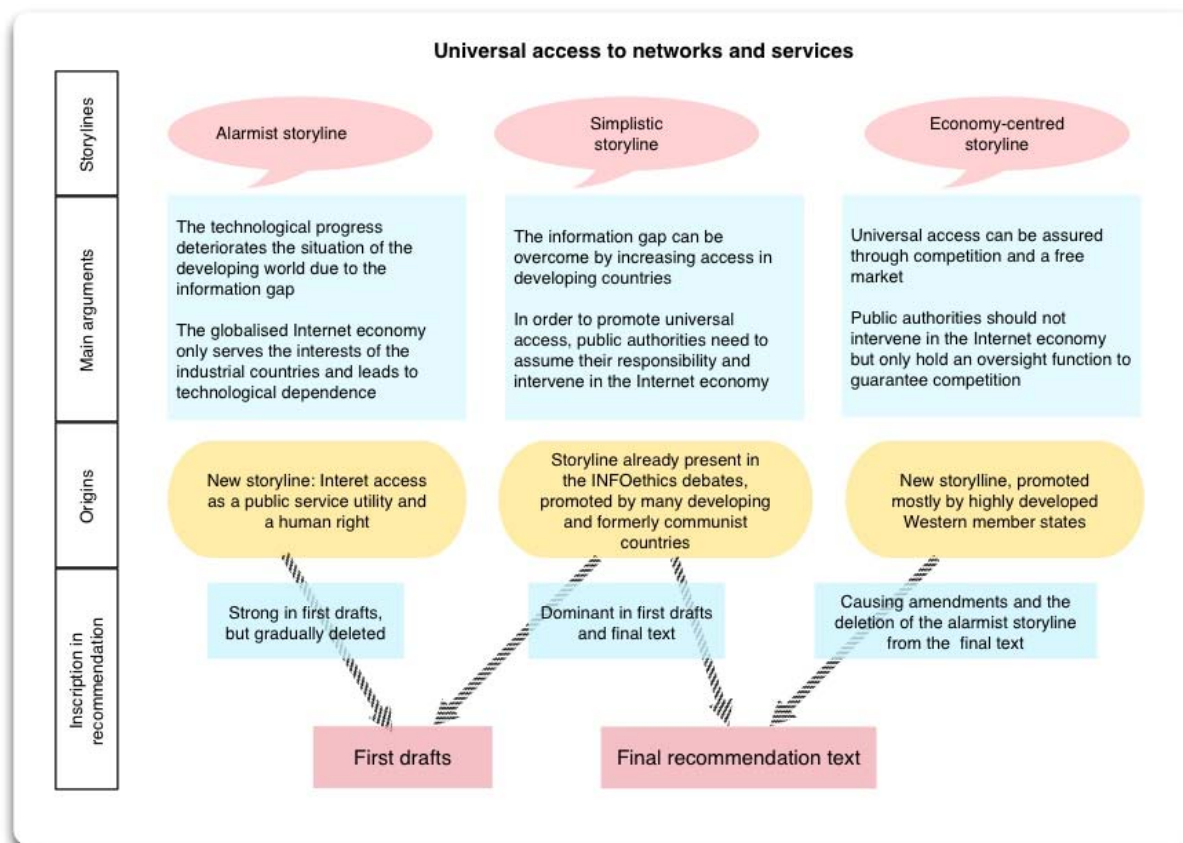


Figure 22: Discourse on universal access to networks and services

## Universal access and the public domain

The first two sections of the recommendation, dealing with universal access in relation to multilingualism, networks and services, mainly proposed measures to help to bridge the information gap and to support those countries, users and language communities that were still excluded from the Internet. In contrast to this, the third and fourth sections of the recommendation addressed a dimension of universal access that went beyond the emblematic issue of the information gap; instead they focused on the ethical and societal challenges arising from the increasing commercialisation of the informational environment and the difficulties of balancing private interests with public interests. Consequently, this second part of the recommendation can be seen as continuation of the discussions about the value of information, which had been very present during the episode of the INFOethics conferences and did not cease to cause tensions within the organisation.

In the recommendation, in line with the ideas discussed at the INFOethics meetings, the set of problems related to the value of information were also emblematically represented

by the twin issues of the public domain and the information commons. Although it had been introduced by Philippe Quéau after his appointment as director of the Information and Informatics Division in 1996, the issue of the public domain was in many ways a logical continuation of UNESCO's information programmes, in particular of PGI dealing with libraries, archives and information databases as well as all activities related to national information policies which had also been discussed during the drafting process of IFAP. However, by setting the focus on the dichotomy between publicly and privately owned information, the debate on the public domain in the recommendation's preparation process framed the same complex of problems very differently. Instead of centring on access and the management of information, it touched on the economic and political interests of member states and other involved parties. The controversies provoked by this shift of discourse become clear when looking at the arguments related to the public domain as proposed by CI/INF in the first drafts, the critical comments of member states and the discourse eventually inscribed in the final recommendation text.

### *1. Proposition of the problem to be regulated*

Unlike the first two sections of the recommendation, for the section about the public domain, the authors of the first drafts included a detailed definition of the concept in the recommendation.<sup>482</sup> Its original formulation drew on the expert study on the public domain prepared by Elizabeth Longworth, the New Zealand lawyer who took part in the INFOethics conferences and later replaced Quéau as director of CI/INF.<sup>483</sup> In addition, it made a clear link between the concept of “public domain information” and the concept of “information commons”, another term that had been introduced by Philippe Quéau in UNESCO:

*“[P]ublic domain information, also known as the information commons means intellectual works, software and technologies that may be used without infringing intellectual property rights provisions or breaching their confidentiality. Such information may be subject to government or state/crown copyright,*

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<sup>482</sup> The recommendation contained a list of definitions, a few of which were discussed in detail during the negotiation processes. The most contested definitions certainly included those on the public domain, on copyright exemption and on the concept of “universal access” itself. Other definitions that were initially included, for instance of “open source”, were later deleted from the list.

<sup>483</sup> Longworth, “The Role of Public Authorities in Access to Information: The Broader and More Efficient Provision of Public Content”.

administered so as to ensure its use for the common goal of society [emphasis in original].”<sup>484</sup>

The definition further included a list of examples of what could be understood as public domain information:

“It includes works on which intellectual property rights have lapsed, anonymous works which are not considered the property of indigenous communities, factual material, ideas, meta-data (data on data) including catalogues of public libraries, official information produced and made available by government, information made available by its developer, etc.”<sup>485</sup>

Building on this definition, the proposition of the problem to be regulated with regard to the public domain was based on a rather broad understanding of public domain information; it did not limit the concept just to information generated or made available by public institutions, an understanding that was very prominent in the debates of the INFOethics conferences and the IFAP drafting process, as part of which the term “public domain information” was often used interchangeably with “public content”.<sup>486</sup> Instead, it integrated this understanding but went beyond it by declaring all publicly accessible information as a public resource whose usage should be as free and wide as possible. Therefore, the bottom line of these first proposals consisted in the idea that, in order to promote universal access, the public domain, as well as the proportion of information that fall under it, had to be expanded:

“The expansion of public domain information and the enhancement of the quality of public content are intrinsic elements of the goals of facilitating universal access. [...] Therefore, it is fundamental to look for strategies and actions to broaden the proportion of global knowledge that can be categorized as public domain information.”<sup>487</sup>

Consequently, the perspective influencing these early drafts of the recommendation and the preliminary report followed the storyline identified in the discursive analysis of the INFOethics debates as the one viewing public domain information as a public good, which needs to be protected as part of the global commons. In this view, public domain information was not only a counterbalance to commercially owned and distributed

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<sup>484</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 12 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> The different understandings of the concept “public domain” and its application during the INFOethics conferences are introduced in chapter 1 of Part III (see here page 234ff).

<sup>487</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 19 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

information but was considered to be an important instrument for fighting social and global inequality. But —according to this narrative— the access to public domain information, in particular in the field of science and research, was increasingly threatened by the economic structures defining its importance and availability in the digital sphere:

“To be accessible, public domain information needs, first of all, to be available and known. Unfortunately, priorities in research and development are determined by the return on investment, rather than public need. The result is that information that belongs to everybody does not interest the investors and is not promoted because it is not expected to lead to direct profits [...]. Policies and international agreements are needed to ensure an effective generation, display and access to this information.”<sup>488</sup>

## *2. Public domain versus private interests*

In contrast to the first two sections in which the measures proposed in the early drafts followed a different storyline to the proposition of the policy problem itself, the initially proposed measures for the issue of the public domain were fully in line with the perspective described above. As a matter of fact, the provisions inscribed in the first drafts of the recommendation and the preliminary report on the recommendation centred on the dichotomy between private and public information and the role of the various actors for preserving the information commons and their availability, increasingly threatened by commercial interests.

With regard to public authorities, these measures claimed that it should be the role and responsibility of governments to guarantee and extend the access to public domain information, through digitisation projects and national information policies, such as freedom of information laws. In addition, public institutions should be strengthened as a counterbalance to commercial actors trying to appropriate a proportion of the information commons:

“Rapid advancement of innovations in information and communication technologies has sparked a race to lay claim to knowledge, resulting in the risks of appropriation and privatization of information which should be in the public domain. It is primarily the responsibility of the public institutions such as libraries, archives and governmental agencies to facilitate access to this type of information.”<sup>489</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>489</sup> Draft recommendation included in UNESCO, 31 C/25 Corr.2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001, 5 (UNESDOC). These ideas were developed in detail in the various articles Quéau published on the matter during the period of the INFOethics conferences and the recommendation's preparation. Although they were not included in the discourse analysis of this chapter, their reading certainly helped to understand the

With regard to commercial actors, the measures proposed that their role for public domain information should not go beyond contributing to and subsidising the creation of public content in exchange for the benefits they make with publicly generated information:

“Measure to encourage private sector contribution to generating information that is a global public good and to facilitating universal access to it should focus on the different forms of returns on investment: tax incentives, subsidies or other form of assistance for properly targeted R&D, knowledge transfer and skill building, etc. Collaborate efforts should be encouraged between the public and the private sector.”<sup>490</sup>

This perspective did not hide its critical stance on the economic interests that third parties could have in what was categorised by the proposed text as public domain information. Moreover, the idea of public service and public domain was very difficult to defend in the immediate post-Cold War period, when most governments enthusiastically embraced the principles of economic globalisation and liberalisation.<sup>491</sup> As a result, the perspective inscribed in the early drafts did not find great support among the majority of UNESCO’s member states. Unlike the provisions proposed for the first two sections of the draft recommendation, which were supported by most governments, none of them expressed unreserved consent for the measures regarding the public domain. And none of the comments framed the issue in similar terms or with the same critical tone.

Instead, the majority of comments reaffirmed the importance of public domain content, thus agreeing with some parts of the proposal, but, at the same time, called for a more balanced approach with regard to private sector-generated and owned information. They therefore expressed a perspective which has, in the analysis of the INFOethics debates and the IFAP drafting process, been identified as the most moderate storyline on the public domain. While this storyline called for a strong public domain, it also emphasised the important role of the information economy and the need for innovation and economic incentives for the benefit of society and the economy at large:

“[T]here is a pressing need to give greater attention to the provision for all citizens of equitable and affordable access to information, particularly

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background of the arguments included in the early recommendation drafts, for instance, Quéau, “Offensive insidieuse contre le droit du public à l’information”; Quéau, “Whose Bright Idea Is That?”; Quéau, “A qui appartiennent les connaissances?”.

<sup>490</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 21 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). In this very first draft, the CI/INF Division even went so far as to propose a “global ‘digital tax’”, similar to the Tobin tax. These proposals were, however, already deleted in the first internal review round and consequently never distributed to member states.

<sup>491</sup> Frau-Meigs, Email interview.

information in the public domain, and to information technologies. To this end, an appropriate balance should be sought between the legitimate rights of the creators/producers of information and of those who use it. Balances must also be found between the interests of the public and private sectors of society, especially in connection with public access to information.”<sup>492</sup>

In response to these calls for a more balanced perspective vis-à-vis commercial actors, all principles and measures that directly addressed the commercialisation of the informational environment and made allusions to its negative impact were deleted from the draft recommendation, the most strenuous of them already after the first internal review at the level of the UNESCO Secretariat. In addition, the demands for a strong intervention of public authorities and all measures dealing with the role of public institutions were weakened, while formulations were added that acknowledged the legitimate role and interest of the private sector regarding the promotion of public domain content, for instance:

“Member States and international organizations should encourage cooperative arrangements which respect both public and private interests in order to ensure universal access to information in the public domain without geographical, economic, social or cultural discrimination.”<sup>493</sup>

### *3. Open access versus open use*

In addition to the generally difficult decision of what counts as public domain content and who is responsible for it, many member states and observers criticised all provisions that linked the issue of the public domain with claims for open access, meaning the free and unrestricted access to both proprietary and public information.

Albeit slightly more nuanced, the criticism expressed by these member states was similar to the storyline put forward by the few representatives of the IT industry and the publisher associations attending the INFOethics conference in 1997 and 2000. Following a mainly economy-centred perspective, they emphasised the monetary value of information and expressed concerns regarding the effects that the proposed recommendation text could have on the differentiation between public domain content

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<sup>492</sup> Comment submitted by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, no date (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The same call for a more balanced approach was also expressed by one of the few NGOs that were actively involved in the preparation process but did not represent a commercial publisher association, see comment submitted by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), 15 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>493</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003, 3 (UNESDOC).



and proprietary information. Interestingly, even member states that were not generally opposed to the recommendation, like France or Iceland, called for a more moderate approach with regard to access and usage of content protected by IPRs by criticising the fact that, in the draft recommendation, “[t]he public domain and intellectual property are being confused in a way that is perilous for the latter.”<sup>494</sup>

According to Paul Uhlir, the American expert who helped the Secretariat to accommodate the critical comments about the public domain section, this “confusion” between IPRs and the public domain derived from the broad definition on which the first drafts of the recommendation text were built.<sup>495</sup> For him, rather than confuse private and public information, this definition would confound the public availability with the open usage of information:

“I believe that some of the problems stem from the overbroad definition of public domain information that is used. Just because a book is in a library does not mean it is in the ‘public domain’. It is still fully protected by copyright. *The definition confuses public domain with public availability.* I presume that some of this semantic confusion is at the source of the publishers’ concerns. Although I fully agree that it is important to promote the availability of proprietary information through public repositories, this is a broader concept and issue than promoting access to public domain content, or facilitating its creation. *The key aspect of public domain information is not simply open or free access, but also unrestricted use* [emphasis added].”<sup>496</sup>

And indeed, in the attempt to relate the issue of the public domain to the overarching theme of “universal access”, the initial texts focused strongly on the access to information instead of the possibility to “use” information. For the same reason, the issue of the public domain was also linked to other contentious measures, such as the promotion of open source software and open access, which followed the same goal of increased access<sup>497</sup>; yet, their combination certainly did not help to overcome the doubts that

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<sup>494</sup> This comment was made by France during the General Conference in 2001, but similar concerns were expressed by countries like Iceland, Canada and others. See summary document “Debate on the Draft Recommendation on Universal Access and Promotion and Use of Multilingualism in Cyberspace”, no document code, 31 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>495</sup> Recall that Paul Uhlir was the then director for international scientific and technical information programs at the US National Academy of Sciences and tried to support UNESCO in gaining the consent of the US government to the proposed recommendation text.

<sup>496</sup> Email sent by Paul Uhlir to CI/INF, “Re: Update on policy”, 2 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>497</sup> For instance, in a later draft version, the following measure was included: “Member States and international organizations should encourage the development and promotion of mechanisms for voluntary open access to information, including open source software.” Draft recommendation revised

member states had regarding UNESCO's ambition behind the section of the recommendation on the public domain. In addition, this access-centred conceptualisation of the public domain did not comply with the understanding of most member states and observers involved in the consultation processes:

“[W]hether or not information is ‘publicly accessible’ hardly is indicative of its status as belonging to the public domain or it being proprietary. Equally, ‘the use of which does not infringe any legal right’ is not indicative of public domain. For instance, open source software or a news article publicly accessible on the internet with a licence to download and print is not at all, by virtue of these permissions, ‘in the public domain’.”<sup>498</sup>

As a result of these exchanges and points of criticism, the definition of the public domain included in the draft recommendation was amended several times in order to increase its coherence with definitions existing in national legislations. Moreover, all references to open source software were gradually deleted from the section, while the necessity to respect IPRs was added to several provisions, for instance:

“Member States should recognize and enact the right of universal online access to public and government-held records including information relevant for citizens in a modern democratic society, giving due account to confidentiality, privacy and national security concerns, as well as to intellectual property rights to the extent that they apply to the use of such information.”<sup>499</sup>

The priority on usage rather than access also led to another interesting new element in the discourse, namely a focus of information literacy and education which had not previously been connected to the question of the public domain but was introduced in later versions of the draft recommendation as part of the respective section. It becomes particularly visible in the draft version prepared by the second expert meeting in 2002 and the subsequent amendments made by IFAP's intergovernmental council. Hence, it can be seen as the continuation of the storyline of information literacy that developed out of the discursive exchanges during IFAP's drafting process; it expressed the idea that solely improving the structural conditions for access to information—whether in the public domain or not— would not be sufficient; instead, it needed to be ensured that people accessing this information dispose of the capacities and the knowledge necessary to make

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during the second expert meeting, no document code, 25-27 March 2002, 8 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>498</sup> Comment submitted by the International Publishers Association to the 2<sup>st</sup> consultation on the recommendation, 6 May 2002 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>499</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003, 3f (UNESDOC). A similar tendency to replace calls for open access with references to IPRs was could be observed for the discussions about the convention on cultural diversity (Frau-Meigs, Email interview).

use of them in a meaningful way.<sup>500</sup> In the end, this new element was inscribed in only one measure, which summarised all provisions regarding information literacy and also included a reference to UNESCO's debates on information ethics:

“Member States and international organizations should promote and facilitate ICT literacy, including popularizing and building trust in ICT implementation and use. The development of ‘human capital’ for the information society, including an open, integrated and intercultural education combined with skills training in ICT, is of crucial importance. ICT training should not be limited to technical competence but should also include awareness of ethical principles and values.”<sup>501</sup>

#### *4. Discourse inscribed in the recommendations*

Due to the strong disagreement of member states with both the proposition of the problem related to the public domain and most of the suggested measures, the substance and the tone of the respective section changed significantly from the first drafts until the adoption of the recommendation in 2003. While the first drafts were characterised by a critical stance on the role of commercial actors and the consequences of the Internet's commercialisation, the discourse eventually inscribed in the recommendation was mainly based on the more moderate approach, acknowledging that information could be both a public resource and a commodity. Consequently, the final recommendation was most prominently characterised by the storyline on public domain, which was already the most dominant during the INFOethics conferences and was equally followed by most member states during consultation processes on the recommendation. By and large, this led to a list of measures that called on member states to:

- Identify and promote “repositories of information and knowledge in the public domain” and make them accessible;
- Encourage cooperation between the private and the public sector;
- Encourage open access solutions, including technical standards of information exchange and the “online accessibility of public domain information on global information networks”;
- Build up a “universally accessible body of knowledge [...] from the massive amount of information produced through development projects” for the benefit of developing countries;

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<sup>500</sup> The focus on media and information literacy was fostered by UNESCO during WSIS and is one of the main pillars of its programme in the field of information and communication until today. In this context, the organisation also promotes Open Educational Resources (OER), thus bringing together the question of access to information and media education.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid., 4.

- Promote ICT literacy and the development of “‘human capital’ for the information society”.

As the outcome of the long translation and negotiation process leading to the adoption of the recommendation in 2003, all references to controversial issues and terms, such as open source software or the “information commons” were deleted from the text.<sup>502</sup> In addition, none of the measures called for the “expansion of the public domain”, the key provision in the initial drafts, but centred instead on the promotion of content already clearly defined as public domain information.

The following figure illustrates the four main storylines that contributed to the discourse included in the section of the recommendation on the public domain and visualises how they influenced the final version of the text:

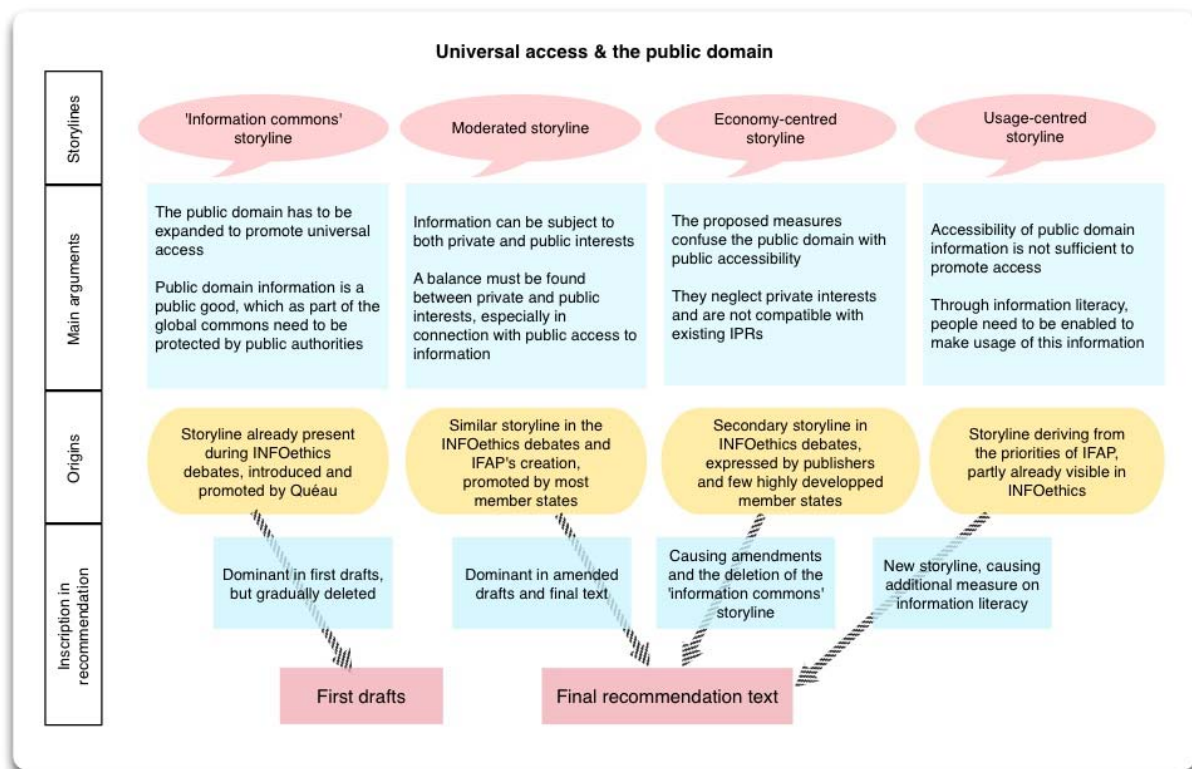


Figure 23: Discourse on universal access and the public domain

<sup>502</sup> The only references to open source software that were preserved in the final recommendation text were included in the section on access to network and services, as a measure to promote ICT for socio-economic development, and in the definition list.

## Universal access and intellectual property rights

While the tensions arising from the growing commercialisation of the informational environment were visible in the comments on the public domain, the necessity of finding a solution for meeting both the societal and public needs as well as the interests of private actors in the information society became even more explicit from the quarrels about the section of the draft recommendation on IPRs. Indeed, although it was not the part of the recommendation that received the most comments by member states (that was the section on multilingualism), the suggested provisions regarding copyright exemptions in the digital space were certainly the most controversial ones. Explaining this controversy solely with reference to the strong economic interests behind IPRs would, however, not go far enough, as there are a number of different reasons behind the controversy:

First of all, even more than in the previous section on the public domain, the initially suggested principles and measures on copyright exemptions were influenced by a storyline on the issue, which was less nuanced than in other parts of the draft recommendation. Arguing that the balance between freely accessible information and protected information needs to be re-negotiated in the digital age, it consisted in the claim that fair use exceptions for scientific and education use of protected information needed to be preserved and extended for the benefit of society at large.

Secondly, in contrast to other sections for which member states easily agreed on the importance of the issues but opposed the general discourse and some of the proposed measures, it was now the issue itself that was controversial. As the analysis of the performative dimension showed, many member states and observers fundamentally questioned whether the complex policy problem related to copyright exemptions in the digital age should be discussed at all and, if absolutely necessary, whether UNESCO was the right place to do so.

And last but not least, it was also the high economic stakes of the issue that contributed to heating up the debates. It was not by chance that this section attracted the attention of influential lobby groups, most prominently the publisher associations, whereas none of the other three issues tackled by the recommendation received strong opposition or support by the professional communities traditionally involved in UNESCO's work.

In light of these reasons, it is not further surprising that this last section of the draft recommendation was also the one which underwent the most significant changes from the first proposal of the preliminary report until the adoption in 2003. With the aim of accommodating all concerns but preserving the original discourse, the section as a whole was re-formulated several times, with only very few elements of the initial drafts remaining in the final document. The arguments causing these amendments as well as

discourse proposed by CI/INF in the first drafts and the one eventually inscribed in the final recommendation text are analysed in the following paragraphs.

### *1. Proposition of the problem to be regulated*

The proposition of the policy problem related to IPRs and their exemptions in the digital age, as included in the preliminary report on the draft recommendation, was in line with the proposal made concerning the public domain. Instead of only applying the claims for more open and free access to public domain information, and thus to information which —by definition— is not protected by IPRs, this last section of the recommendation extended them to copyright-protected material. It did, in large parts, repeat ideas and arguments that Philippe Quéau had developed in many of his articles and was, therefore, strongly influenced by his vision of an information society in which, for the benefit of all, information should be considered a common good rather than a commercial product.<sup>503</sup> In addition, this was also the storyline on copyright that had clearly figured among the most dominant storylines on the topic during the INFOethics conference. Yet, already back then, it had also been one of the most contested storylines, being opposed by UNESCO-internal actors, like Milagros del Corral, who took part in the first INFOethics conference in 1997, and by the representatives of publisher associations who attended the conference in 2000.<sup>504</sup>

In the context of the recommendation, all principles and measures proposed in relation to IPRs were oriented towards the overarching goal of promoting universal access. In summary, two main arguments were made about how IPRs would relate to this goal: First of all, to tie in with the first two sections of the recommendation focusing on overcoming the information gap, the initial draft was based on the argument that existing IPR regimes risked deteriorating the unprivileged situation of developing countries by rendering the much needed access to information even more difficult and costly:

“Le droit d’auteur ne doit pas être un instrument pour creuser le fossé entre pays industrialisés et pays en voie de développement. Tout au contraire, la société de l’information étant une opportunité formidable pour ces derniers, les instruments juridiques qui la régulent, au premier plan desquels figure le droit

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<sup>503</sup> Another sign for this was that the section on IPRs in the first draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation was written in French, Quéau’s native language, instead of English as the rest of the document. Although Quéau’s articles about IPRs and the public good were not part of the discursive analysis for this chapter, the arguments included in the articles allowed for a better understanding of the overarching narrative behind the recommendation’s draft.

<sup>504</sup> Del Corral, Email interview.

d'auteur, doivent veiller à ne pas priver les pays en voie de développement du bénéfice de l'accès à la technologie et à l'information."<sup>505</sup>

Secondly, with regard to IPR regulations, the argument was made that existing rules and agreements should not be taken as immutable. Instead, with the changes in the informational environment due to pervasive digitalisation, these regulations needed to be reviewed and adapted. Only that way —so it was argued— would all countries and all people in society be able to benefit from the new possibilities of accessing information and other digital content:

“The relation between the principle of intellectual property and the principle of free access to information are not defined by natural law and is not immutable; instead it needs permanent reconsideration in the light of technological/media change and of changing societal *[sic]* needs. [...] It is counterproductive to insist on existing rights, laws, rules and regulations when there is agreement on the need to overcome the global digital divide and this has not been met in the past despite the promises of the information age. This information paradox needs to be resolved by new ways of thinking which are not restricted by particular interests.”<sup>506</sup>

As a result of the detailed narrative on IPRs and universal access, the section consisted in a very long description of the problem to be regulated, that was eventually deleted from the document, and a rather short list of suggested measures.

## *2. IPR exemptions and the public interest*

Again in line with the section on public domain, in this last section the proposed measures did not follow a different, more moderate storyline than the one influencing the description of the problem to be regulated. Instead, the provisions proposed in the first draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation continued the same discourse by focusing on how IPRs could be adapted to the digital age. This adaptation should not consist in reducing those exceptions and limitations to exclusive IPRs that existed in analogue times, nor should it consist in compromising them through technical measures that restrict online access to material formerly subject to fair use exemptions. Rather, the existing exceptions should be preserved and, in some cases, even be extended in order to

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<sup>505</sup> Text written by Quéau as input for the recommendation, included in the email correspondence of the CI/INF Division, May–August 2000 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>506</sup> Comment by Rainer Kuhlen on the IPA and STM position paper, 20 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

strengthen the role that libraries, schools and universities can play for the information society and to contribute to promoting universal access:

“Les exceptions aux droits des auteurs, quelque soit le régime législatif dans lequel elles s’insèrent, doivent être adaptées à l’environnement numérique. Il s’agit principalement de maintenir les exceptions dans des limites telles qu’elles ne causent pas un préjudice grave à l’exploitation des œuvres numériques. [...] Une réflexion sur le rôle de l’éducation et des bibliothèques dans l’environnement digital doit être lancée. Si nécessaire, les exceptions existantes doivent être étendues afin de permettre à l’éducation à distance et aux bibliothèques numériques de jouer un rôle dans la Société de l’information.”<sup>507</sup>

This demand seemed to be the key proposal of the section on IPRs — it was also suggested by the section’s title “Application of legal exceptions in copyright law”. And although its formulation was already toned down during the first internal review round, it provoked divided responses:

On the one hand, a few member states and observers, mainly from the former Communist bloc, supported the proposed measures and reiterated the importance of copyright exemptions for the purpose of scientific research and education, yet hardly ever without also naming the importance of copyright protections:

“We understand the importance of protecting creator rights in these works. However, our members are also great users of copyright material. Academic staff understand that new ideas are built on the past and present work of others. For this reason, CAUT [the Canadian Association of University Teachers] also seeks to ensure that strong guarantees of access to works are a central part of copyright law. Our belief is that a vibrant information commons — a place where ideas and information exist not as property, but as the shared heritage of humanity — is fundamental to the social and economic development of all peoples. This information commons is dependent on a robust public domain. It is also dependent on balanced regimes of copyright law that provide strong exemptions for the use of works for purposes of education, research and criticism.”<sup>508</sup>

On the other hand, some other member states and all publisher associations involved in the consultation processes opposed the perspective expressed in the early draft recommendations. In line with the economy-centred storyline, which had already been identified for all other sections, they advocated for the preservation and reinforcement of existing IPRs. In their view, the easy distribution and reproduction possibilities offered by

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<sup>507</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 24; 29 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>508</sup> Comment submitted the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) to the 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation on the recommendation, 15 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).



digital technology represented a threat to the interests of authors and publishers. Hence, they rejected the idea of maintaining the fair use or similar exemptions and advocated instead for new technological models of on-demand payment systems allowing users to buy the information they needed.<sup>509</sup> For this reason, they saw the provisions suggested by the draft recommendation as hostile to copyright-owners and their legitimate interests:

“The Draft Recommendation clearly perceives intellectual property as a threat and it omits any reference to existing international instruments that confirm intellectual property as a human rights. [...] The Draft Recommendation gives the misleading impression that exemption from copyright infringement and limitations on the level of copyright protection lies in Member States’ best interest, when in reality it is the publishers’ investment in creativity —which copyright protects— which truly supports the information society.”<sup>510</sup>

### *3. Negotiating a balance between private and public interests in the information society*

In response to the critical comments received by member states, the focus of the section on IPRs gradually changed with the different draft version. This change was also reflected in the section’s title, which was first altered to “Adapting the ‘fair use’ principle to the electronic environment” and later to “Reaffirming and promoting of the equitable balance between interests of rights-holders and the public interest”. And indeed, in the later versions of the text, the balance between private and public interest replaced the claim for copyright exemptions as the section’s priority. It did, however, introduce an interesting contradiction, which gave rise to another round of complaints and subsequent amendments. From the various comments received during the consultation processes, it appears that both the storyline dominating the early drafts as well as the position of the publisher associations and like-minded member states were based on the conviction that the other one represented a risk to the fragile balance maintained by the existing copyright regime.

At one end of the spectrum, the draft proposed by CI/INF at the beginning of the preparation process claimed that the strengthening of IPRs and the reduction of their exceptions and limitation for the purpose of research and science would represent an

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<sup>509</sup> For a better understanding of the arguments made by the publisher associations, it was also helpful to analyse the two presentations given by them at the INFOethics 2000 conference, in which they explain in detail why they see the need to limit copyright exceptions in the digital age.

<sup>510</sup> Position paper of IPA and STM regarding UNESCO’s draft recommendation, included in email sent by Bonnie Richardson, Vice President of MPAA, to Shirley Hart, US observer at UNESCO, “FW: UNESCO, draft resolution, 15 Oct – 3 Nov 2001, Paris”, 21 September 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

attempt to destabilise the still existing balance to the disadvantage of the public interest. In contrast to many commentators' criticisms, this storyline did recognise the legitimacy of the rights of authors and producers of online content, but claimed that these rights were not of overriding importance for the sake of economic growth, innovation and creativity. Instead, they should be equal or subordinated to the public and societal interest and, therefore, counterbalanced through the named exceptions and limitations:

“Le maintien de l'équilibre entre droit d'auteur et accès à l'information constitue un défi majeur de la Société de l'information. [...] Les exceptions sont des instruments essentiels dans la définition de l'équilibre et la prise en compte des libertés fondamentales et de l'intérêt public dans le régime du droit d'auteur. Elles ne constituent pas seulement des exceptions aux droits mais traduisent l'équilibre fondamental entre l'intérêt sociétal et l'intérêt de l'auteur qui est à la base même du droit d'auteur.”<sup>511</sup>

In a later version of the text, this call for a new balance was formulated even more clearly, also including reference to Human Rights:

“A consensus on a new balance between the interests of authors and copyright holders and those of the public has to be sought in the spirit of Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in close cooperation with all the interested parties so as to ensure smooth circulation of protected works in the electronic networks as well as adequate access for educational and scientific purposes and for critical review.”<sup>512</sup>

At the other extreme, the comments by publisher associations and some few governments, for instance the United States or Sweden, suggested that there was no need to redefine the balance contained in existing copyright treaties and that the reference to Human Rights was fundamentally misleading. In their opinion, the only threat to this balance was represented by the measures proposed in the draft recommendation:

“No new balance needs to be found. Nor need that balance be found in the [...] declaration on Human Rights. In fact, the balance is contained in existing conventions and treaties on the law of copyright, such as the Berne/TRIPS and WCT three-step test. It is this existing balance which was developed in the analogue world, that needs to be applied or transposed to the electronic environment.”<sup>513</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> First draft of the preliminary report on the recommendation, prepared by CI/INF, no document code, August 2000, 23ff (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>512</sup> Draft recommendation included in UNESCO, 31 C/25 Corr.2 Annex II Rev.2, 1 November 2001, 9 (UNESDOC).

<sup>513</sup> Letter sent by Lavizzari, Legal Counsel of IPA, to del Corral, 26 October 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). The same was expressed by Sweden: “The present balance between the interests of those holding intellectual property rights on the one hand and public and individual interests

In addition, in between these extremes, there was once again a more nuanced and moderate position, which was visible in the bulk of the comments by member states. As was already the case in the previous sections and during the INFOethics conferences, this moderate storyline was characterised by the idea that, in order to guarantee fair IPRs, existing exemptions needed to be preserved in the digital environment but should not be extended beyond their existing boundaries. While most of these comments acknowledged the complexity of defining an adequate balance between public and private interests, they expressed concern, however, with regard to the suggested wording of the draft recommendation, perceived as biased against the interest of rights-holders:

“Iceland would like to express some reservations, at least regarding the wording of the present paper. Although accepting in general the basic principles, we would like to remind of the preamble of the WIPO copyright treaty of 1996 where the desired balance between common access and the right to exemption of copyright is better stroke, recognizing ‘the need to maintain a balance between the rights of authors and the larger public interest, particularly education, research and access to information, as reflected in the Berne Convention’.”<sup>514</sup>

#### *4. Discourse inscribed in the recommendations*

Altered several times, in quite fundamental ways, between the first drafts in 2000 and the finally adopted version in 2003, the section on IPRs and their exemptions is the only part of the recommendation for which it is difficult to retrace the exact evolution of the inscribed discourse. By the end of the negotiation process, the initial eight pages of text outlining the problem to be regulated were entirely deleted from the document and solely three measures remained, preserving very little of the original ideas. Based on a comparison between the first and the last version of the text, some general observations can be made:

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on the other must be kept.” Comment submitted by Sweden to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 14 May 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>514</sup> Comment submitted by Iceland to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, 5 February 2001 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code). A similar perspective was, for instance, expressed by Canada: “[T]here is a pressing need to give greater attention to the provision for all citizens of equitable and affordable access to information, particularly information in the public domain, and to information technologies. To this end, an appropriate balance should be sought between the legitimate rights of the creators/producers of information and of those who use it. Balances must also be found between the interests of the public and private sectors of society, especially in connection with public access to information.” Comment submitted by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to the 1<sup>st</sup> member state consultation on the recommendation, no date (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

First of all, those of UNESCO's member states and observers who complained that the recommendation's provisions would omit existing copyright agreements eventually succeeded in having the acknowledgement and references to particular agreements prominently inscribed in the text's preamble and in all three measures of the respective section:

“Taking into account international treaties and agreements on intellectual property, in order to facilitate the promotion of universal access to information.”<sup>515</sup>

In addition, the two main provisions of the early drafts were still visible in the final document, namely the focus on copyright exemptions and on the balance between public and private interest. But the tone of the respective measures as well as the weight of the different interest changed. Thus the strong demand for preserving and extending legal exceptions to copyright in cyberspace was alleviated by limiting them to “certain special cases” and adding references to the interests of copyright holders and, once more, existing copyright agreements and the limitation:

“Member States and international organizations, when appropriate, should encourage rights-holders and the lawful beneficiaries of limitations and exceptions to copyright and related rights protection to ensure that such limitations and exceptions are applied in certain special cases that do not conflict with a normal exploitation of the work and do not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the rights-holders as required for in the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT).”<sup>516</sup>

The case was the same for the measure proposing the update of IPRs. While the idea of adapting existing national copyright laws is still visible in the final draft, its original objective was extenuated by demanding the involvement of rights-holders in this adaption process and proposing that existing agreements would already contribute to a fair balance between them and the public:

“Member States should undertake, in close cooperation with all interested parties, the updating of national copyright legislation and its adaptation to cyberspace, taking full account of the fair balance between the interests of authors, copyright and related rights-holders, and of the public embodied in international copyright and related rights conventions.”<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> UNESCO, “Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace”, 32 C/Resolutions, Resolution 41 adopted on 15 October 2003, 1 (UNESDOC).

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

And lastly, the impact of digital technology, which was also emphasised repeatedly in the early drafts, was mentioned in the final document. However, the formulation eventually inscribed leaves it to the reader and to member states to decide whether the technological impact could potentially harm copyright protections or represent a hurdle for access:

“Member States and international organizations should pay careful attention to the development of technological innovations and to their potential impact on access to information in the framework of copyright and related rights protection under international treaties and agreements.”<sup>518</sup>

In the final analysis, the adopted version remained close to the key issues proposed in the initial draft of the recommendation. However, the general discourse and the objectives of each measure were significantly altered by reiterating the importance of existing copyright regulation and emphasising the interest of private rights-holders in the information society.

The following figure visualises the three storylines that contributed to this shift of discourse:

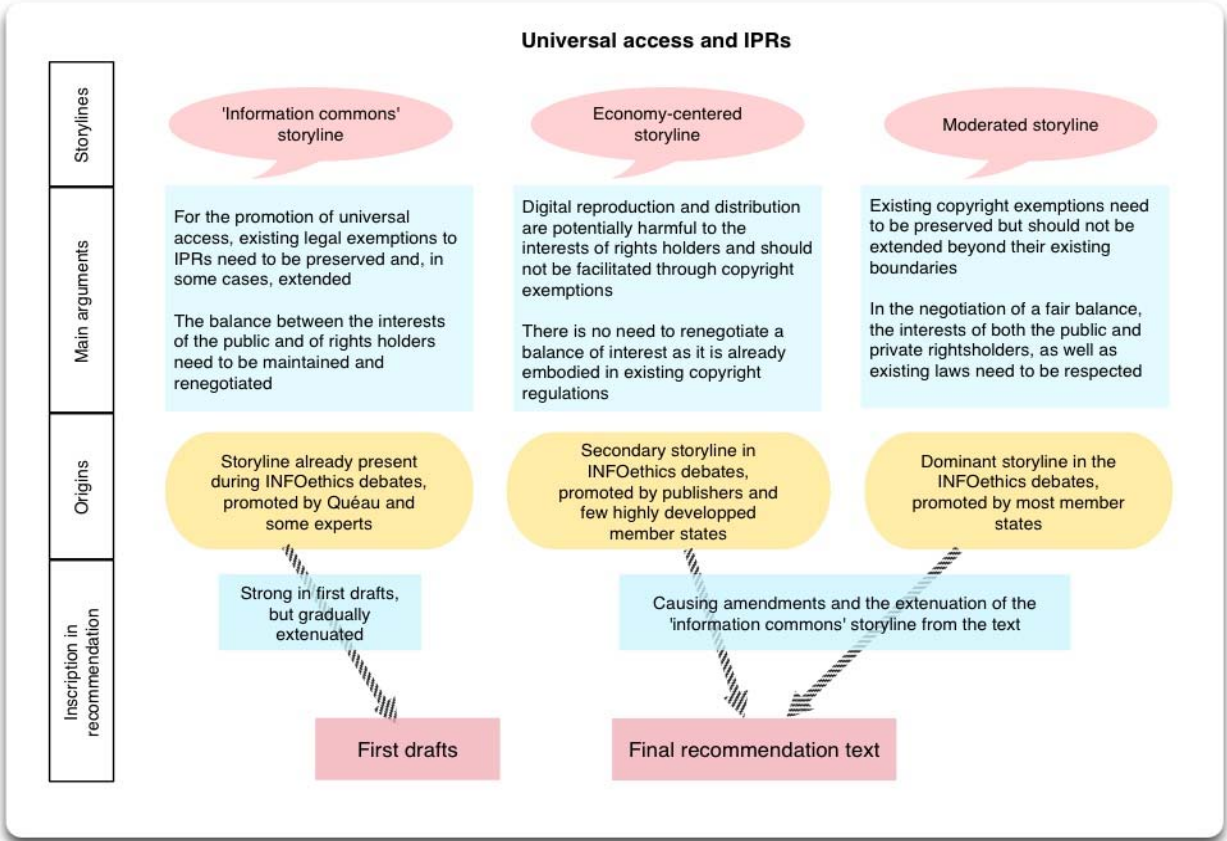


Figure 24: Discourse on universal access and IPRs

<sup>518</sup> Ibid., 5.

## Chapter conclusion

With the preparation of an international instrument on cyberspace, the UNESCO Secretariat aimed at inscribing its policy response on the information society into a document adopted by its General Conference, which would fix the different discursive elements in a stable way. It can therefore be seen as the last step in the organisation's long search for a coherent discourse on the role of information and the responsibility of public authorities in the digital age. In addition, as a recommendation is a normative instrument to be adopted by consensus rather than by majority voting, the discourse had to be negotiated with all member states in order to reach a text that all involved actors could agree on. Accordingly, this episode of UNESCO's response to the societal impact of digital technology was described in this chapter as the organisation's search for a consensus on the information society.

The drafting of the recommendation on cyberspace took place in parallel with UNESCO's work on cultural diversity and the preparation of two normative instruments on the issue, a non-binding declaration adapted in 2001, followed by a binding convention in 2005. Since the policy debate on cultural diversity also influenced the debate on the information society, it was introduced as constituting the general context for the episode under scrutiny. Moreover, the cultural diversity paradigm influenced the debate on the information society as it resulted in a new focus on cultural and, more specifically, linguistic diversity in cyberspace. Combining this new paradigm with the existing discourse on universal access and copyright exemptions not only broadened the scope of the recommendation, but also contributed to gaining stronger support from UNESCO's member states. Not least thanks to this move, the CI/INF was eventually able to convince the members of the General Conference to adopt the controversial instrument on cyberspace.

In order to analyse the interests and concerns of member states as well as the controversies they caused, this chapter retraced the performative dimension of the recommendation's preparation from the General Conference's decision in 1997 to the final adoption of the instrument six years later. It showed that, during this third episode, the most influential actors were the member states and a few observer organisations that acted in close cooperation with the United States, the only non-member state involved in the negotiations. In addition, the UNESCO Secretariat, in particular the CI/INF Division, acted as Obligatory Passage Point as it not only proposed the initial drafts of the recommendation but also implemented all amendments brought forward by member

states; therefore, it was able to inscribe several elements, which clearly emerged from its own priorities instead of those of member states. Unlike in the first two episodes of UNESCO's policy response to the information society, professional and academic experts were only marginally involved in the process and played a purely reactive role of trying to implement suggestions by member states into the draft recommendation. This distribution of roles, privileging member states over experts, was also reflected by the political and diplomatic tensions that arose during this episode and significantly impacted the content and formulation of the recommendation and, accordingly, eventually shaped the discourse inscribed in UNESCO's official policy statement on the information society.

But to categorise the difficulties encountered during the drafting process of the recommendation as purely political would be to take too narrow a view. Instead, in the final analysis, it appears that they were also caused by the attempt to combine two different objectives in one single instrument. The analysis of the discursive dimension showed that it is possible to identify two takes on universal access in the drafts of the recommendation and the comments made by member states:

- (1) On the one hand, the first two sections of the recommendation —concerning the questions of multilingualism and access to telematics services— seemed to relate to the problem of access from a *development perspective*, with the gap between information-rich and information-poor countries/societies being the main obstacle for universal access; accordingly, the respective measures were of particular relevance for developing countries, which were still excluded from the global information networks.
- (2) On the other hand, the last two sections of the recommendation —regarding the public domain and copyright exemptions— appeared to regard the problem of universal access from a more *socio-economic perspective*, viewing it as a question of balance between commercial and public interests in cyberspace; as a consequence, the measures proposed in these sections were less relevant for the developing world still struggling with basic access problems, but mainly concerned highly-developed countries with more advanced information societies.

In light of this two-sided objective, it appears that, in many ways, the recommendation was caught in the same key discrepancy as the one that had already been observed for IFAP's preparation process, namely the discrepancy between an initiative in support of developing countries, with the goal of bridging the information gap, and an initiative

tackling broader societal and ethical problems of the information society. This also explains why the first two sections of the recommendation were less controversial than the last two, although they were initially influenced by the same alarmist and economy-critical storyline. As was the case in the preparation of IFAP, member states were able to agree much more easily on measures allowing for bridging the information gap than postulations that interfered with their economic interests and political priorities.

The confrontations between competing storylines —the one proposed by the CI/INF Division marking the initial drafts and those put forward by member states and observers— resulted in a text that signified a regression compared to the very critical viewpoints dominating the INFOethics conferences. Even though the difficult questions of access to public domain content and copyright exemptions were still mentioned, the recommendation did not propose any innovative solution that could allow for counterbalancing the economic forces at play. Instead, most measures followed the most moderate perspective on the challenges of the information society, also acknowledging the very critical standpoint of the few influential Western governments, publisher organisations and, most prominently, the United States.

Even though the categorisation of divergent positions and storylines proposed in this chapter is necessarily a reduction of the variety and multitude of arguments on the topic brought forward within the third episode of UNESCO's response to the information society, they often corresponded to the storylines observed for the first two episodes. Moreover, the actors, their practices and their argumentative and discursive struggles in the three chapters also show a certain similarity, without being identical. In order to give a final overview of the different episodes of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society and to illustrate their linearity and differences, the following and final empirical chapter represents an attempt at analysing the Actor-Network observed in this thesis in its entirety and full complexity.

Instead of providing here a separate conclusion to Part III, which would summarise the results of the performative and discursive analysis of the three episodes of UNESCO's policy response to the information society, the subsequent Part IV provides a general conclusion, which relates the findings of the empirical analysis to the conceptual and methodological framework and the historical, institutional and thematic background.



## PART IV:

# Analysing policy discourse “in the making” — an interpretation and conclusion

Against the background of UNESCO’s long history of activities in the fields of communication, information and digital technology, the thesis assessed *how* the organisation reacted to the arrival of the Internet and to the changes triggered by the increasing pervasiveness of digital technology. The approach chosen for this assessment set the focus on discourse rather than activities and policy implementation, and therefore consisted in analysing the emergence of UNESCO’s official policy discourse on the information society from 1990 to 2003. This corresponds to the period in which the organisation tried for the first time to elaborate a coherent and comprehensive perspective and to stabilise it in policy texts and an intergovernmental programme.

The thesis’ focus on discourse is based on the conception of policy-making as “a constant discursive struggle”, introduced by Fischer and Forester in their seminal work on the importance of language for public policy-making.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, in this thesis, policy discourse is conceptualised as a set of ideas, concepts, frames and definitions that gives meaning to a real-world phenomenon, structuring it as a concrete policy problem and proposing solutions. Due to its structuring function, the production and reproduction of discourse is perceived as an iterative process: by addressing the problem and its potential solutions in official policy texts —that is, by inscribing the policy discourse into text— the world-view behind the discourse is stabilised and reproduced in common policy thinking.

The most common analytical approach to policy discourse would be to assess the discourse as it is reflected in official policy texts issued by UNESCO. However, in order to analyse the creation and emergence of the discourse, rather than its content, the

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Fischer and John Forester, eds., *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1993), 2.

empirical research of this thesis focused on how arguments and actors and their interrelation contributed to the search for ideas, the structuration of competing policy discourses and, finally, their institutionalisation in organisational settings and intergovernmental policy texts. Through this process-centred analysis, the thesis attempted to open the black box of policy-making within an international organisation like UNESCO, and to understand its internal dynamics and the practices of actors by studying them with an almost ethnographic interest. This shifted the assessment away from the established teleological perspective of policy analysis: of primary interest was not the input and output of policy-making and their causal relations, but rather the policy-making processes themselves, including the practices of deliberation and decision-making, the power relations established by these interactions, and the meaning-making capacities of all involved actors. All these elements were seen through the lens of policy discourse and were consequently only taken into consideration as far as they had some kind of influence on the discourse creation itself.

To account for this particular interest in policy discourse creation, the empirical research of this thesis was based on a conceptual framework that drew on two different, yet interrelated, methodological approaches. In order to link the analysis of discursive struggles with the assessment of the concrete processes in which they occurred, the research adopted an interdisciplinary perspective: on the one hand, the discourse analysis was based on Marteen Hajer's method of Argumentative Discourse Analysis (ADA); on the other hand, the process analysis was inspired by selected concepts and tools of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), commonly used for the study of knowledge creation in science and technology. While the first approach made it possible to examine argumentative structures and discursive exchanges during policy debates (the "discursive dimension" of policy-making), the latter was chosen for analysing the social creation of meaning in heterogeneous policy-making environments and for giving a precise account of the policy-making processes relevant for the understanding of the discourse and its emergence (the "performative dimension" of policy-making). Accordingly, their combination allowed for the policy discourse to be assessed as the outcome of discursive struggles among networks of actors involved in policy processes. As such, it helped to unravel the often chaotic and irrational internal workings inside the "black box" of international organisations and to study the creation of discourse on the micro-level.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Borrowed from the field of natural sciences and technology, the term "black box" stands for a device whose complex internal workings must not be known in order to predict its outputs. ANT considers a black box as a metaphor for a stable situation: "A black box contains that which no longer needs to be reconsidered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference", see Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, "Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: How Actors Macro-Structure Reality and How

However, in this thesis, the challenge of combining the two approaches of ANT and ADA did not consist in applying each of them separately to the two distinct dimensions of policy discourse. Instead, in order to analyse policy discourse “in the making”<sup>3</sup>, the discourse, actors and practices, together with their wider context, had to be considered at all times as an inseparable network in which all elements mutually interacted with each other. Part III described the performative and discursive dimensions of the three episodes of UNESCO’s response to the information society and outlined the mutual interaction of discourse and practices during each episode. On this basis, this concluding part of the thesis aims to highlight continuities between the three episodes, to illustrate their differences, and to provide an additional interpretation by questioning the role of ideas, power and interests in the creation of UNESCO’s policy discourse. Moreover, this last part of the thesis identifies the shortcomings of the thesis’ conceptual and methodological framework and considers ways of partially overcoming them.

## 1. Analysing policy discourse on the performative level

The performative level of the creation of UNESCO’s policy discourse on the information society was analysed with regard to the main *heterogeneous actors* within and outside UNESCO. This analysis included human actors and groups such as staff members, member states and experts, but also non-human actors such as, most importantly, documents and contextual elements that influenced the policy-making processes during the three episodes under scrutiny.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, particular attention was paid to how actors *translated* their interests and ideas in order to convince others to share their perspective. These acts of “translating” included all processes of negotiation, persuasion and calculation, which allowed the actors to construct common definitions and meanings, while contributing to the emergence of a shared discourse.<sup>5</sup> In this context, the empirical

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Sociologists Help Them to Do so”, in *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology: Towards and Integration of Micro- and Macro-Sociologies of Knowledge?*, ed. Karin Knorr-Cetina and Aaron V. Cicourel (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 285.

<sup>3</sup> Studying a process “in the making” is a reference to ANT’s early empirical studies of creation and production processes in science and technology, see Latour, *Science in Action*.

<sup>4</sup> Recall that, for ANT, everything that is a source of action, whatever its nature, is considered an actor. According to this principle of “generalised symmetry”, not only human individuals or groups but also non-human “actants”, such as animals, objects, texts, conversations, debates, rules and procedures, act upon other actors and processes and, therefore, need to be part of the analysis.

<sup>5</sup> According to ANT, it is through the efforts of translation that actors mobilise other actors to share their political, social, cultural or economic interests. Therefore, the process of translation can be considered to be the creation of alignment in interest.

research of this thesis focused on how some actors established themselves as *Obligatory Passage Points* (OPP) within UNESCO's policy-making practices in order to achieve and stabilise their power position within the actor-network. More precisely, the research assessed how individual actors or groups of actors tried to render themselves indispensable and position their power in a way that all other actors needed to interact with them in order to achieve their own interests and goals.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the performative analysis centred on the question of how the power positions and the translations of actors led to *discourse structurations*, meaning the moments when the ideas and discursive elements proposed by one or several actors were taken on, for instance, by a group of influential member states or by a division of the UNESCO Secretariat.<sup>7</sup> In this way, the actors proposing the discourse exerted power over the latter, contributing not only to the strengthening of the discourse but also to the stabilisation of their own position in the network. All these aspects were analysed taking into account the broader contextual elements that were necessary to understand the actors' practices and the creation of power relations within the observed actor-network.

The thesis followed ANT's idea that a network is not an independent object with fixed boundaries, but rather a concept that serves as a methodological instrument to set the boundaries for the description of the observed processes.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, the actor-network observed and described in this thesis was composed by all relevant elements that were involved in UNESCO processes contributing to a shared policy discourse on the information society. It did not, however, contain elements or individual policy actors that were officially part of the processes but did not act upon them and, hence, did not have any influence on their outcome. At the same time, the consideration of different actors went beyond the conceptualisation of actors prevalent in policy studies, which conceives of them as individual policy entrepreneurs who intentionally use their knowledge of and their influence on policy processes to extend their power and further their own policy ends. Instead, the boundaries of the actor-network were extended in order to take into account every actor who had a visible impact, independently of whether his actions were carried out intentionally or followed a concrete policy goal.

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<sup>6</sup> Recall that the concept of OPP was introduced by ANT-author Callon as one of several different means of translation.

<sup>7</sup> Recall that, according to Hajer, a discourse structuration occurs when a discourse begins to dominate the way in which a social group conceptualises a certain problem.

<sup>8</sup> As outlined in Part II, according to ANT, the instrument of the "network" serves two different functions: on the one hand, the network is a tool used by the researcher to develop his description; on the other hand, a network is what is drawn by the description.

Against this conceptual background, it appeared that, within the observed actor-network, there were three different major groups of human actors that had significant influence on UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society:

- (1) These groups were, first of all, the staff members working at the UNESCO Secretariat, in particular within UNESCO's Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics (CII), since 2000 known simply as the Sector for Communication and Information (CI).
- (2) Secondly, the discourse was shaped by UNESCO's member states, represented by their delegates in UNESCO's General Conference and the Executive Board.
- (3) The third group which had considerable impact on the creation of a policy discourse was made up of the various professional communities with whom UNESCO cooperates for the planning and implementation of its programme activities, including the national experts represented in the various intergovernmental programmes and the professional associations formally related to UNESCO.<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of the observations emerging from the analysis of the performative dimension, it became clear that, during the period under scrutiny, the power relations between these three groups did not simply depend on institutional structures and UNESCO's organisational set-up. Even more importantly, the power relations were shaped by the practices of actors and the interactions between and within the different groups of actors. Accordingly, the most influential factors regarding the performative dimension of UNESCO's policy discourse were not only the actors themselves but also the dynamics amongst actors on the micro-level. To a certain extent, these micro-level dynamics reflected dynamics on the larger institutional or geopolitical level, for instance the priority given to the return of the United States to UNESCO or the Director-General's support for one division rather than another. Nevertheless, it would be insufficient to explain the occurrences on the micro-level simply by reference to these overarching structures. Instead, the detailed observation of the performative dimension showed that, ultimately, UNESCO's policy discourse was often influenced or shifted in a new direction by actors who, at first sight, seemed to be in a less powerful position than others.

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<sup>9</sup> Recall that professional and academic experts have played an important role within UNESCO since the organisation's inception. For this reason, they have even be called "the second constituency" of UNESCO, with UNESCO's member states being the first constituency (Hoggart, *An Idea and Its Servants*, 60).

There are two different yet interrelated behaviours of actors that contributed to this particular micro-level dynamic: on the one hand, the practices of actors through which they tried to translate their ideas and influence other actors through their arguments; on the other hand, the practices used by actors in order to position themselves in a strategic way within the actor-network and to influence other actors through this strategic position.

The result of the practices used by actors to translate their ideas and convince others to share them becomes apparent when comparing the influence that the different groups of actors exercised in the context of the three episodes that have been analysed in this thesis. Thus, the first episode, which consisted in the search for new ideas and the organisation of the INFOethics conference series, was characterised by a rather unusual freedom that the UNESCO Secretariat experienced during its brainstorming about the impact of digital technology on society. This freedom was due to the fact that member states were neither closely involved in the search for and specification of issues that UNESCO should focus on, nor in the formulation of first position statements regarding these issues. As a result, the members of the Secretariat were able to propose, test and discuss new ideas that might otherwise have been opposed and discarded at an early stage due to political considerations and resistances.

This was particularly the case for the Division for Information and Informatics (CII/INF) and its newly recruited director Philippe Quéau who, during this early episode, benefited from the lack of member state control, which allowed him to propose and introduce new ideas and perspectives. Furthermore, Quéau was able to promote his perspective on the information society by choosing many of the experts invited to the INFOethics conferences on the basis of their ideas and expertise, instead of selecting them on the basis of their nationality and affiliation with a particular professional group, as is usually the case for intergovernmental expert conferences. Despite their diverse backgrounds, most of these experts shared the belief that UNESCO's response to the Internet and the information society should be guided by principles other than the purely technological or economic. In addition, many of them were part of the same epistemic community as Quéau and reinforced his ideas regarding the role of information as a common good. With these experts' support, the CII/INF Division was able to translate its own ideas in a way which is rather uncommon in member state-driven intergovernmental organisations like UNESCO. As a consequence, it was able to structure the organisation's official discourse not only during this first episode but during the entire period under scrutiny in this thesis and beyond.

The freedom and influence of the UNESCO Secretariat, however, changed during the second episode analysed in this thesis, the preparation of UNESCO's new intergovernmental programme for the information society. During the drafting process of IFAP's definitive documents, the most influential actors proved to be the professional communities holding longstanding relationships with UNESCO. More precisely, the performative dimension of this episode was dominated by experts who had previously been involved in UNESCO's intergovernmental programmes for information and informatics, PGI and IIP, the two programmes that were dissolved in order to make way for IFAP's inception. Although it was decided very early in the preparation process that IFAP was to be an intergovernmental programme, and thus a programme in the service and under the supervision of UNESCO's member states, it was not the member state community but a group of professional and academic experts that took the lead during IFAP's drafting process. In fact, official governmental representatives did not propose any fundamental contributions to the definitive documents but were merely able to comment on the ideas and positions put forward by the experts, and to finally approve them during the sessions of UNESCO's governing bodies. That way, the ideas of this small group of experts involved in the drafting process were the source of all conceptual and activity-related aspects that IFAP covers. In addition, the experts eventually succeeded not only in translating most of their recommendations and demands into the objectives of the new programme, but were also able to secure their future influence by inscribing their own consultative role into the structure of the new programme through the creation of an intergovernmental expert council. Thus, the dynamics during the preparation and set up of IFAP worked to the advantage of the ideas and arguments put forward by professional communities, and this despite the fact that, according to UNESCO's nature as an intergovernmental organisation, their voices usually carry less weight than those of member states.

In contrast to the first two episodes, which were marked by comparatively little activity on the part of UNESCO's member states, the influence of governments increased significantly during the third episode analysed in this thesis. During the preparation process of UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, it was the community of member states, represented by their delegations and National Commissions, that eventually shaped the discourse inscribed in the text of UNESCO's international instrument on cyberspace. Since it was their role to agree on the instrument during UNESCO's General Conference, member states had ultimate control over the content and exact wording, and their comments and objections could not be circumvented by the other actor groups. This

might be unsurprising for an instrument that, despite its non-binding nature, had to be adopted by the international community. Yet it appears that the most significant influence on the recommendation's text was exerted by the only non-member state involved in the negotiations, namely the United States. In concert with the few publishers' associations that acted in close cooperation with it, the United States tried to translate its ideas and arguments using not only the procedures made available to them, such as official consultations, but also lobbying strategies and the publication of dissenting position papers.

However, despite the impact these strategies and the official consultation processes had on the final recommendation text, the first drafts had once more been prepared by the UNESCO Secretariat, more precisely by the CII/INF Division, which subsequently also implemented all amendments. Accordingly, the fundamental ideas on which the recommendation was built and the policy problems it tackled were once more those tabled by the UNESCO Secretariat, combined with some of the issues proposed by the professional experts during IFAP's drafting process. However, during the long and wearisome preparation process, the arguments exchanged by member states and the United States were translated into the text and shaped its final wording. This distribution of roles, privileging the voice of governments over experts and staff members, was also reflected by the political and diplomatic tensions that arose during this third episode, which significantly impacted the discourse inscribed in UNESCO's official policy statement on the information society.

The strategies of actors by means of which they tried to translate their ideas were only one of the sets of practices that contributed to the particular micro-level dynamics observed. The other set, which is different yet related to the first one, consisted in the practices used by actors in order to position themselves in a strategic way in the actor-network and to influence other actors through this strategic position. Indeed, despite the uneven distribution of influence, in all three episodes analysed in this thesis, the three groups of actors continuously interacted and cooperated in the creation of a common policy discourse. By doing so, they often competed with each other while trying to establish themselves as Obligatory Passage Points within the network of actors. Moreover, the groups did not only compete with one another. Within their own groups, too, different actors vied with each other for the most strategic position that would allow them to better translate their interests and ideas.

The group of actors most successful in positioning itself in a way that all other actors had to interact constantly with it was the UNESCO Secretariat and its staff. During all three episodes, the Secretariat constituted an OPP for all exchanges between member states and



between the various expert communities, as it mediated and coordinated all policy debates and prepared the decisions to be taken by the member state community. Moreover, the staff members of the Secretariat organised all conferences and meetings, and occasionally even chose the experts to be invited. They also assembled the comments and proposals made by member states and experts, prepared the drafts of most policy documents, and implemented the amendments proposed by the other groups. Consequently, all other groups of actors needed to co-operate with the Secretariat, thereby rendering it an indispensable actor within the network.

But also within the Secretariat, the various divisions vied with another for more influence. This was most prominently the case during the preparation of the cyberspace recommendation, when, in 1999, UNESCO's Director-General Mayor created a special Task Force on Cyberspace Law and Ethics within the CII Sector as a parallel structure to the existing CII/INF team working on information ethics, headed by Philippe Quéau. Both teams considered it to be their responsibility to serve as the focal point for the recommendation's preparation, a responsibility that enabled them to prepare the respective drafts, assemble and implement all comments and, thus, influence the general tone of the document. After having overcome these internal struggles, it was the small CII/INF Division which, thanks to its strategic position, was able to play the role of an OPP for the entire preparation process and, in this way, to structure UNESCO's overall discourse on the information society.

The CII/INF Division's most important competitor for the position as an OPP for the creation of a policy discourse on the information society was the United States and thus, once more, the only actor involved in the processes analysed in this thesis which was not part of any of the three main groups. Despite the fact that it was not even a member state of UNESCO during the preparation of UNESCO's cyberspace recommendation, the United States used its influence on the organisation's leadership in such a way that its approval or disapproval of the recommendation's text was crucial for its adoption. In fact, the United States used its strategic position as a non-member state to exercise pressure on both UNESCO and some Western governments for which the return of the United States to the organisation was a political priority. Thus, by framing the deletion of some formulations in the draft recommendation as a condition of its return, the US government was able to influence the final text more than any other country.

By doing so, the United States positioned itself as an OPP not only vis-à-vis other groups of actors, such as the Secretariat and the professional experts, but also amongst the other countries involved in the preparation and adoption of the cyberspace recommendation. Since UNESCO is an intergovernmental organisation in which governments are the only

official decision-making authority, almost all decisions of the organisation need to be formally approved by UNESCO's member state community. But the governing structures of UNESCO, as a specialised UN agency, also stipulate that each member state has one vote, independent of its size or budgetary contribution, in order to avoid that one country should be in a more powerful position than others. Overcoming this institutional boundary, the United States, acting in concert with the publisher organisations sharing its concern, used the high priority attributed to its return to UNESCO as a strategy for exerting power over others, in this way translating its interest and structuring the discourse inscribed in the final document.

To sum up, in combining the observations made separately for the three episodes analysed in this thesis, it becomes apparent that the performative dimension of UNESCO's emergent policy discourse on the information society was not simply determined by UNESCO's institutional structures or the overarching power relations amongst its member states. Instead, the dynamics on the micro-level were shaped by the practices of the various actors and the interactions between and within the different groups of actors. As a result, UNESCO's official policy discourse was based on ideas and issues that had been suggested by the UNESCO Secretariat during its early brainstorming meeting and by the professional communities involved in the preparation of the Information For All Programme, and not by UNESCO's member states, even though they are the primary constituency of UNESCO. Moreover, due to the strategic positions that both the US government and the UNESCO Secretariat held in the policy processes under analysis, the arguments and ideas eventually inscribed in UNESCO's official policy document on the matter —the Recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, adopted in 2003— were filtered and structured by two actors that, according to UNESCO's institutional set-up, should not have had any influence at all: a country that was not part of the organisation's governing bodies, and UNESCO staff members, who are officially only supposed to act as facilitators in the service of member states.

## **2. Analysing policy discourse on the discursive level**

The power dynamics between different groups of actors, as well as those within these groups, were not only reflected on the performative level, but also had strong repercussions on the discursive level. In general, the discursive dimension of the three

episodes under scrutiny in this thesis was characterised by the development of *emblematic issues* and *storylines*, which as a whole made up a comprehensive discourse on the information society. Following Hajer's approach of Argumentative Discourse Analysis, "emblematic issues" represent vehicles for the discussion of complex sets of problems which serve to reduce them to simpler issues which are representative of the bigger "problématique". And in fact, through reference to emblematic issues, actors involved in UNESCO's policy processes were in many cases able to exchange arguments, which addressed the issues in their full complexity.<sup>10</sup> It was possible to group most of these arguments into several competing storylines about the same emblematic issue, which were used by actors to evoke associations of the larger set of problems behind the emblematic issue without having to describe it in full detail.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the identified emblematic issues and storylines continued to characterise UNESCO's policy position over the entire decade under scrutiny, up to WSIS and beyond. Yet others proved to be too controversial. Once proposed by one or several actors, they provoked fierce debates and power struggles and, as such, they either continued to exist in a less pointed formulation or disappeared entirely. Therefore, besides identifying emblematic issues and storylines, the analysis of the discursive dimension also focused on assessing how actors, thanks to their power position in the network, *inscribed* their interpretation of emblematic issues and storylines into documents or institutional arrangements, thereby leading to the *institutionalisation* of the particular discourse expressed by these issues and perspectives.<sup>12</sup>

Since the discourse analysis was based on the assessment of the performative dimension, it was possible to retrace the origins of the different competing discourse lines. In addition, it was possible to reconstruct the way in which some ideas, issues, and storylines were adopted by actors, transformed, and eventually inscribed in UNESCO's discourse on the information society. This happened either through their institutionalisation as part of an organisational setting, for instance in the Information For All Programme, or as an

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<sup>10</sup> For each of the three episodes under scrutiny in this thesis, a number of particularly prominent issues were identified as being emblematic for the larger complexes of questions. Many of them did not only serve as vehicles to discuss these complexes, but also had a set of subordinated issues linked to them which were part of the same complex but appeared less prominent in the debates and official statements.

<sup>11</sup> Recall that, according to Hajer, storylines are condensed statements that are used by actors as short-hands in discussions in order to summarise the emblematic issues.

<sup>12</sup> Recall that, in ANT-tradition, "inscriptions" are the efforts of an actor to fix an alignment of interests, achieved through processes of translation, in a stable way, for example in an official statement or —more ideally— in an organisational setting. In ADA, this process is called discourse institutionalisation, meaning the solidification of a discourse in a particular institutional arrangement.

international instrument adopted by the member states community, such as the 2003 recommendation on multilingualism and access to cyberspace.

From the analysis of the different aspects and steps contributing to UNESCO's policy discourse, it appeared that most of the emblematic issues emerged from internal brainstorming efforts of the Secretariat during the first half of the 1990s. In the attempt to develop a first coherent policy position regarding the information society, which would not only take into account the opportunities but also the challenges and threats of the new digital environment, the idea emerged that UNESCO should focus on the ethical dimension of the information society. These first brainstorming efforts of the Secretariat were taken to the next level when the organisation recruited Philippe Quéau as the new director of the recently created CII/INF Division, which was responsible for the organisation of the INFOethics conference series. Thus, besides the CII Sector as a whole, Quéau can be considered as the most important individual instigator of new issues and discursive storylines during this early phase. Supported by an epistemic community that shared his beliefs and visions, Quéau not only added a very market-critical perspective to the on-going debates on ethical behaviours and moral values in the digital age; he also introduced and promoted new concepts and ideas, such as the information commons and the extension of the fair use principle to the digital environment, which soon came to characterise UNESCO's official policy discourse on the matter.

In addition to the emblematic issues and discourse lines put forward by members of the Secretariat, there were an important number of issues raised by the professional experts cooperating with UNESCO in the framework of its information-related intergovernmental programmes. Particularly during the drafting of IFAP's definitive documents, the involved librarians, archivists and documentation specialists suggested emblematic issues, such as a focus on preservation in the digital age and on information literacy and media education, which have continued to be part of UNESCO's main priorities in the field of information up to the present day. In addition, the experts mainly promoted different and often more moderate storylines on the issues proposed by the Secretariat, which were equally institutionalised thanks to their inscription in IFAP and other policy documents.

Interestingly, hardly any of the emblematic issues that became part of UNESCO's policy discourse were suggested by UNESCO's member states. Although some of the experts involved in IFAP's inception had close links with their governments and acted as their representatives, their concerns seemed to express less the position of their countries than that of their professional communities. Equally, during the sessions of UNESCO's governing bodies and in the context of the various member state consultations,

governments did not use the occasion to put forward any issue that subsequently was taken up by others and became part of the general policy discourse. Nonetheless, governments were surprisingly successful in proposing and inscribing alternative storylines on the emblematic issues put forward by the Secretariat and the expert communities. In fact, they often opposed the perspective proposed and promoted by the Secretariat or experts, and expressed different perspectives, which were either more moderate or entirely contrarious.

It is difficult to sum up the various emblematic issues that were introduced by the UNESCO Secretariat or the expert community during the period under scrutiny, particularly since some of them concerned very particular policy problems, such as the focus on preservation of information that emerged during IFAP's preparation. However, it is possible to summarise the discursive exchanges with a set of questions for which UNESCO tried to find a response with its policy discourse on the information society:

- Which are the ethical challenges posed by the increasing digitalisation of the informational environment and society as a whole?
- What are the roles of UNESCO, as the intellectual and cultural organisation within the UN system, and its member states in this changing technological and informational environment?
- And which are the values and norms that should guide their actions?

Each emblematic issue identified for the discursive dimension of the three episodes under scrutiny can be interpreted in one way or another as a response to one of these questions.

Even more challenging than summarising the various emblematic issues would be a synopsis of the multiple competing, but often also compatible, storylines that policy actors developed during the assessed debates. Many of these storylines only concerned one particular emblematic issue and, therefore, cannot be generalised. However, despite the variety of opinions, it is possible to categorise most storylines according to the perspective they expressed, ranging from a rather positive and unconcerned to a pessimistic, alarmist or critical perspective:

- (1) First of all, many of the story lines were characterised by an unrestrained market-critical perspective, which often took on an alarmist or pessimistic tone, warning about what would happen if public authorities did not assume responsibility and left the informational environment to self-regulated market forces alone. This perspective

was introduced and promoted most prominently by the team of Philippe Quéau and his epistemic community. It was mainly expressed through arguments related to the public domain, the global information commons, and the extension of fair use exemptions to digital information. Part of this perspective was also that it was up to governments to intervene in the existing information economy in order to reduce the gap between “information poor” and “information rich”, to avert the risk of linguistic and cultural homogenisation, and to increase the free availability as well as the quality of content, in particular of content belonging to the public domain.

- (2) At the opposite end of the spectrum, it is possible to identify storylines that were influenced by an economy-centred perspective, often marked by a hands-off approach to technological developments and an unconcerned view on the resulting socio-economic inequalities. This perspective was initially expressed by the private sector representatives present during the INFOethics conferences. Later, it was even more insistently promoted by some Western member states, such as Denmark or Japan, the few publisher associations involved in the drafting process of the recommendation, and, last but not least, by the United States. Instead of emphasising the public, social or ethical value of information, most of these actors deliberately defined information in economic terms only and emphasised the importance of strong intellectual property rights in the digital age. Sceptical about all kinds of governmental intervention, they expected the information gap and the problem of linguistic diversity to be solved over time, thanks to the increase in access to digital technology and to the self-regulation of the information economy.
- (3) Besides these two extreme perspectives, it was always possible to identify a more moderate and nuanced storyline, which in many ways represented the middle ground between them. The nuanced perspective frequently appeared also to be the most dominant among UNESCO’s member states, in particular amongst those countries which belonged neither to the most highly developed countries nor to the large group of developing countries. Accordingly, these countries were not among the most advanced information societies, which enjoyed the most social and economic benefits of the globalisation of digital technology and information, nor were they confronted with the same fundamental problems in accessing and using digital technology that the developing world had to face; thus, they took a more moderate stance on most issues discussed within UNESCO. Furthermore, since they represented the majority of UNESCO’s member states, it was often the nuanced and moderate storyline that was eventually inscribed in the policy texts. Regarding the value of information, this

perspective acknowledged that information could be both a public resource and a commodity. Consequently, from this perspective, both public and commercial information had an important role to play for innovation, economy and the benefit of a globalised information society. Advocates of this perspective also expressed a more moderate position with regard to the regulation of the information economy, considering it to be the shared responsibility of governments, public authorities and the IT industry to increase access to information, protect the public domain and foster linguistic diversity online.

The categorisation of *all* storylines according to one of these three perspectives would be an over-simplification of the variety of opinions, arguments and positions expressed by the actors involved in the policy processes under analysis. In many cases, there were not only these three, but also a fourth or fifth perspective on the same emblematic issue. Nevertheless, the categorisation helps to summarise roughly the competing points of view. In addition, it shows that many of the discursive struggles were due to the discrepancy between two entirely opposite views regarding the value of information and the regulation of the informational environment, with a third view that tried to find the middle-ground between them. While the advocates of the moderate perspective were sometimes able to find compromises between the economy-critical and economy-centred perspectives, they never succeeded in fully bridging the immense gap between actors who privileged the public interest over economy-related concerns and those who considered the interests of the private sectors to contribute ultimately to the well-being of society at large.

The analysis of the discursive dimension showed that, in all three episodes under scrutiny, the tensions between opposite perspectives on the same emblematic issues were most intense when there was an artificial combination of two different objectives:

- (1) The first objective was to improve the informational situation of the developing world by increasing the access to information and the quality of available information. It expressed a *development perspective*, which considered the gap between information-rich and information-poor countries to be the main obstacle for a global information society. Accordingly, this part of UNESCO's discourse was of particular relevance for developing countries, which were still excluded from the global information networks.
- (2) The second objective was more general as it tried to meet the challenges that all countries —developed and developing countries— were facing in light of the increasing commercialisation of the informational environment. Thus, it expressed a

*socio-economic perspective*, which was mainly concerned with the balance between commercial and public interests in cyberspace. As a consequence, this part of the discourse was less relevant for the developing world, which was still struggling with basic access problems. Instead, it mainly concerned highly developed countries with more advanced information societies, in which debates on “cyber commons” and the “Internet as a public good” also often took place on the national level.

The discursive dichotomy between these two different objectives became apparent during the drafting process of IFAP’s definitive documents, but became even clearer during the long and difficult preparation of the recommendation on multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace, adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in 2003. While most governments supported the parts of the discourse targeted at developing countries, many industrialised countries found it more difficult to find an agreement on the parts that aimed at a new balance between public and private interests in the informational environment. Thus, they were reluctant to agree to documents and statements which tried to combine the two different objectives in one coherent discourse.

But this alone cannot explain the increase in political tensions and discursive struggles over the time period analysed in this thesis. In fact, while the discourse promoted by parts of the UNESCO Secretariat and the expert community did not alter over time, or may have been even more radical during the early phase than in later years, the response of member states changed quite significantly. In addition to the above-described dichotomy between objectives, this was due to contextual reasons that were not directly related to the content of the discourse itself:

First of all, the earlier years of the emergence of UNESCO’s policy discourse were comparatively quiet since, at the time, only a few member states showed any noteworthy political interest in UNESCO’s initiatives. Furthermore, many countries, in particular from the developing world, were not yet aware of the possibilities and challenges triggered by digital technologies and, on a daily basis, were confronted with problems they considered more urgent. They only grew more attentive in the run-up to the World Summit on the Information Society, whose preparation was approved by the UN General Assembly in 1998 and which led to increased international dialogue on issues related to ICTs and their socio-economic impact.

Secondly, even after the official start of the WSIS preparation process, the focus of the international debate on the information society was placed primarily on questions of physical access and capacity building, topics on whose importance all involved actors could easily agree. Thus, even then, most governments were not particularly concerned by



the other issues that were being discussed within UNESCO at the time. Only when it became clear that the debates at UNESCO touched upon the political and economic interests of both the developing and the developed world did tensions first arise, and some —mostly Western, developed countries— started to voice criticism and opposition to the storylines promoted by the CII Sector and its epistemic community.

Thirdly and most importantly, the increased interest of governments and their growing resistance to the discourse proposed by the UNESCO Secretariat and its epistemic community was due to the different ends of the analysed policy processes. Thus, both the early brainstorming meetings and the INFOethics conferences were only fora for the exchange of ideas and did not seek any concrete policy outcomes, except for some internal position statements. By contrast, the preparation of IFAP had more concrete policy implications, since the text elements inscribed in the programme's definitive documents became part of UNESCO's official response to the information society. Yet, since IFAP focused mainly on practical activities —activities which, furthermore, had a limited time frame and could later be adapted to the changing digital environment— governments did not attribute high political significance to the drafting process. By contrast, once the adoption of an international instrument became the objective of UNESCO's efforts, many member states became aware of the implications that might follow from their disinterest, and started to intervene more proactively in the policy process. Despite the fact that a non-binding UNESCO instrument does not have a great impact on either national or international policy agendas, governments knew that every argument or postulation inscribed in the recommendation would be part of UNESCO's official policy discourse; consequently, every subsequent text could draw on the recommendation's wording, and policy-makers could justify their actions by referring to the text. This concern became even more important when it was decided that the recommendation was to constitute the organisation's key policy statement on questions regarding the information society and that, as such, it would represent UNESCO's contribution to WSIS.

In the final analysis, on considering the evolution of the discursive dimension of UNESCO's policy response over the entire period under scrutiny in this thesis, it becomes clear that the discursive struggles that the organisation had to face were not simply due to differences in perspective. Nor can they be attributed solely to the discursive opposition of arguments that actors used to promote their perspective. In fact, most of the emblematic issues and the different storylines had been part of UNESCO's debate on the information society since the early brainstorming meetings of the Secretariat. Over time, they were simply expanded in order to account for the concerns of

the expert communities involved in IFAP's creation and other actors that joined the debate at a later stage. Yet even then, it was possible to attribute almost all of their arguments to a particular perspective that had already been expressed earlier on. Accordingly, the increase in political tensions that UNESCO faced during the preparation of its cyberspace recommendation cannot simply be attributed to the emergence of new competing perspectives. Instead, the differences between the respective episodes analysed in this thesis owe to the objectives of the policy processes and the ways in which the policy processes contributed to the institutionalisation of UNESCO's policy discourse. The discourse's inscription into an internationally adopted instrument was, in this regard, considered a much more stable institutionalisation than the creation of an institutional structure, such as IFAP, or even more markedly so, some half-official policy statements elaborated by the UNESCO Secretariat and a conference series. As such, all actors were more concerned to defend their interests in the later processes than they had been in the early stages.

### **3. Analysing policy discourse as the result of paradoxes**

The discourse analysis of the arguments made by actors and the performative analysis of the policy processes contributing to the emergence of UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society provide fundamental insights into the means by which member states, staff members and experts tried to position themselves on one side or another of the discourse creation process on the micro-level. Yet, the last two sections have shown that, when looking at the performative and discursive level from a macro-perspective, it is not sufficient to explain the controversies within UNESCO solely with reference to discursive exchanges and the practices of actors resulting in temporary power relations.

At the same time, it would equally be too narrow a view if, in the attempt to generalise the different perspectives encountered within UNESCO, the political and argumentative struggles that UNESCO had to face while developing a common policy discourse were attributed to the confrontation of two fundamentally different world-views or ideologies, resulting in two opposed approaches to the information society: one built on neo-liberal economic and techno-centric principles and, as such, privileging the private over the public interest; and another built on information commons and free access to public information, which, accordingly, gives priority to the public interest.<sup>13</sup> Although many of

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<sup>13</sup> The categorisation of different approaches to the information society and the Internet according to this binary logic is very common amongst scholars and policy-makers. For instance, Robin Mansell framed it

the member states' representatives, the members of the UNESCO Secretariat and the different professional and academic experts expressed opinions and ideas which could be ascribed to either one or the other vision, such a general distinction between two ostensibly opposite world-views could not but entail an oversimplification of the actual conflicting viewpoints. Even more than the categorisation according to different perspectives expressed by competing storylines on the same emblematic issues, it would reduce the variety of perspectives to a binary opposition. In particular, it would fail to take account of the more moderate and nuanced storylines identified in the analysis of the arguments contributing to UNESCO's policy discourse on the information society; nor could it explain the position of actors that called for a balance between private and public interests and the cooperation of governments with the information industry for the benefit of all.

In order to reach more general conclusions regarding the various discourses and perspectives identified in this thesis and, at the same time, avoid reducing them to a binary logic of opposed ideologies, it is necessary to add an additional layer of interpretation to the micro-level analysis of the performative and discursive dimensions of UNESCO's policy discourse. To this end, this sub-chapter undertakes a survey of the origins of the interests and ideas of actors in order to understand where the arguments used in UNESCO's policy debates derived from.

However, the aim of this additional interpretation is not to add *a posteriori* explanations to the performative and discursive analysis, which would give external justifications for the arguments and practices of the actors; indeed, this would represent a clear break with the principles of Actor-Network Theory that inspired this thesis.<sup>14</sup> Instead, the additional analysis is built exclusively on the basis of aspects that emerged from the observation of the three episodes under scrutiny in this thesis, simply approaching them from a different angle. One way of viewing the discourses and practices of actors on the micro-level differently is to interpret them as the expression of deep-rooted disagreements about the nature of information and technology. These disagreements cannot simply be overcome

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as the dichotomy between two opposing social imaginaries of the information society. Mansell mentions, however, that such a two-fold classification into a dominant and alternative social imaginary bears the risk of oversimplifying the actual opinions, ideas and beliefs behind these imaginaries and therefore proposes subsequently a more nuanced and detailed understanding of the controversial viewpoints. See Robin Mansell, *Imagining the Internet: Communication, Innovation, and Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Recall that, as postulated by ANT's originators, ANT-inspired research should not start from any *a priori* assumptions about processes and actors. Analogously, they also criticise the tendency of referring to external theoretical frameworks that are added *a posteriori* to the description in order to explain the actions of the observed actors. See Latour, "On Using ANT for Studying Information Systems: A (somewhat) Socratic Dialogue", 71.

since they result from a number of paradoxes which are an inherent part of an increasingly networked and globalised informational environment.

It was recognised very early on that the growing pervasiveness of digital technology and information results in paradoxical situations which render any policy response to these changes a complex and, in many ways, inherently unsatisfying undertaking. Thus, UNESCO itself proclaimed the paradoxical nature of the information society in an article issued by the organisation in 1997. In this short text, UNESCO placed particular emphasis on the problem that information society policies far too often focus solely on the economic and technological problems of information networks, while it is their impact on society that is the most urgent policy matter:

“Paradoxe: seuls sont évoqués, le plus souvent, les aspects économiques de l’expansion des réseaux d’information, alors que ce sont leurs fondements éthiques et leurs implications sociales qui doivent faire l’objet du plus large débat.”<sup>15</sup>

While this contradiction between different priorities was certainly one of the aspects contributing to the many misunderstandings between actors involved in UNESCO’s policy response to the information society, it says very little about the competing beliefs and interests on which these different priorities are based. Two paradoxes which do offer insight on this matter, and are furthermore particularly valuable for shedding light on the debates taking place within UNESCO, are the “paradox of information scarcity” and the “paradox of complexity”, both of which are proposed by Robin Mansell in her extensive survey of common perspectives on the information society.<sup>16</sup> As such, these two paradoxes do not only make possible a better understanding of UNESCO’s confrontations regarding the value of information and the possibility of regulating the informational environment in times of digitalisation. Rather, by linking the paradoxes to distinct research traditions and different approaches to technological change, the reference to Mansell’s reflections about paradoxes also helps to identify the beliefs, assumptions and interests of the actors that lay behind their concurring perspectives on the same issues.

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<sup>15</sup> UNESCO, “Sous le signe du paradoxe”, Contribution of the Director-General of UNESCO to the supplement “Where is the Internet Leading the World” of the World Media Network, sent via letter by CII/INF to Hector Feliciano, CII/INF/AP/97.280, 26 September 1997 (consulted before official archiving, no UA code).

<sup>16</sup> Mansell, *Imagining the Internet*. Other authors also recognised the paradoxical nature of the information society. For instance, Marshall notes five “paradoxes of the information society” that arise due to the constant “disorder” of technological networks, including the need for free exchange of information versus the need for control of information. See Jonathan Paul Marshall, “The Information Society: Permanent Crisis through the (dis)ordering of Networks”, *Global Networks* 13, no. 3 (2013): 291ff.

For Mansell, the paradox of information scarcity consists in the fact that, on the one hand, information is costly to produce and, therefore, intellectual property rights can be framed as the optimal incentive for creativity, diversity, and growth. Yet on the other hand, in the digital environment, information is virtually costless to reproduce; accordingly, it is also possible to state that the free distribution of information is the optimal incentive for creativity, diversity, and growth. According to Mansell, the paradox arises from the fact that both these perspectives are correct, and yet contradict one another. Consequently, policy-makers are faced with the challenge that, in order to foster technological innovation and economic growth, the (constructed) scarcity of information needs to be maintained, while at the same time, its abundance and diversity need to be promoted.<sup>17</sup>

Although there are many factors that contribute to this contradictory situation, Mansell emphasises the particular importance of different research traditions that influence the way in which people look at the role of technology and information. On the one hand, there are perspectives that are influenced by an instrumental research tradition, which is typically related to the belief that progressive technological innovation will result in social improvements. Characteristically, this tradition asks questions about how innovation processes function but not how they actually matter to the every-day life of people. Accordingly, this research tradition generates a perspective on information that privileges its role for innovation over its societal value. On the other hand, Mansell identifies a perspective on technology and innovation which is influenced by critical research traditions. These traditions are independent of instrumental objectives and are therefore more likely to challenge dominant opinions about the social value of technological progress. The resulting critical perspective typically asks questions about the implications that innovation and technologies have for all members of society, at the global level. Accordingly, opinions inspired by this perspective usually pay attention to the consequences that technological progress and innovation have for social and cultural differences, for participation in society and for the well-being of people.<sup>18</sup>

The paradox of information scarcity, together with its relation to distinct research traditions, provide the basis for a better understanding of UNESCO's endless struggle over the value attributed to information. Already long before the period under scrutiny in this thesis, the organisation served as a forum for controversial debates in which different

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<sup>17</sup> Mansell, *Imagining the Internet*, 66; 179.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 35ff. Mansell does not limit the influence of these two different research traditions to the paradox of information scarcity but, instead, sees it as a factor which also contributes to the paradox of complexity and to the contradictions between competing social imaginaries on the information society in general.

perspectives on the access to and the production of information took centre stage. Indeed, the conflicts of the NWICO debate in the 1970s can to some degree be interpreted as fundamental disagreements between, on the one hand, states that attributed an instrumental value for economic growth to information and information technology, and thus tried to control its production; and, on the other, those that called for more diversity and the co-creation of information for the social and economic benefit of all.<sup>19</sup> Even more clearly, the paradox of information scarcity helps to explain the situation after the creation of UNESCO's General Information Programme (PGI) and its gradual adjustments to the growing information economy, even as this period was marked by a lower degree of geopolitical tension than the NWICO debate. On the one hand, some of the governmental experts represented in PGI's council emphasised that the programme should be based on the perception of information as a resource, which should be widely and freely accessible for the benefit of scientific exchange. On the other hand, other experts and governments accentuated the economic value of scientific and technical information, whose scarcity served as an instrument for the stability and growth of national information economies. Therefore, instead of contributing to the free circulation of scientific and technical information, they considered it UNESCO's role to help its less-developed member states to enter the logic of the information economy.<sup>20</sup>

But most importantly, the paradox of information scarcity sheds light on the controversies encountered during the INFOethics debates and, later on, during the preparation of the recommendation on cyberspace. Indeed, the continuous confrontation between staff members, experts and member states can be framed as the result of a paradoxical situation, in which both sides —those advocating strong intellectual property rights, and those promoting the global public domain and the information commons— had a valid point. Accordingly, both groups believed that their position vis-à-vis the access to information and the value attributed to it in the digital environment would, in the long run, lead to more social justice on the global level. For Quéau and his epistemic community, whose arguments were clearly inspired by critical research traditions, this could only be achieved by increasing the abundance and diversity of information. The publisher associations, the United States and their allies, per contra, based their arguments

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<sup>19</sup> Of course, the NWICO conflict cannot be reduced to this one contradictory aspect, which was only one of the many issues at stake. The background of the claims behind the NWICO movement and UNESCO's role in it were discussed in detail in the historical chapter in Part I (see here page 62ff).

<sup>20</sup> The shift of PGI's mandate from a programme fostering the free circulation of scientific information to a development programme was analysed in detail in Part I (see here page 88ff). It was part of a general shift of UNESCO's activities in the field of information and communication towards more practical, development-oriented projects.

on instrumental research traditions that privileged innovation and the growth of national economies and the international information market. Thus, neither position was motivated by purely material interests or ideological convictions. Rather, they emerged out of the different ways of thinking about the value of information, which have evolved over many years, and each of which had its own blind spots and legitimacies.

Viewing these disagreements as the result of the paradox of information scarcity explains why any attempt to institutionalise a policy discourse which did not account for the paradoxical situation could not but provoke fundamental disagreements. Any approach based solely on storylines promoting the abundance of information, or wishing to maintain its intrinsic or constructed scarcity, would thus be intrinsically flawed. Accordingly, no compromise could possibly be found that did not acknowledge both perspectives on information scarcity. This was also evident in the policy discourse eventually inscribed in UNESCO's recommendation on multilingualism and universal access in cyberspace, which consisted in a combination of the two extreme positions. Indeed, it was marked by a nuanced perspective that tried to find the middle ground between the public and private interests in the informational environment.

While the question of information scarcity allows for a different perspective on UNESCO's enduring difficulties in finding agreements regarding the value of information, the paradox of complexity offers insights into the nature of a different conflict. It adds a new layer to the assessment of differing opinions regarding the question as to whether regulation is needed at all in order to achieve an inclusive and more equal information society.

According to Mansell, the paradox of complexity is linked to the increasingly complex nature of technological systems, which become more and more difficult to master and ostensibly grow out of human control.<sup>21</sup> For her, the paradoxical situation is due to the fact that it is possible to argue that, as a result of the uncontrollable complexity of technological progress, the self-regulation of markets and technology can lead to a continuous process of innovation, which eventually reduces inequality and injustice in society. Therefore, it is correct to state that intrinsic benefits follow from the emergent complexity in the technological system because it leads to a loss of control. At the same time, it is also possible to argue that the decentralised nature of the complex technological system bears the advantage that control and change is possible not only from above (e.g. through governmental policy interventions), but also from below (meaning through the

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<sup>21</sup> Mansell bases her assessment on system theory and its application to technological and human systems. It would, however, go beyond the scope of this chapter to summarise her usage of the concept of "complex adaptive systems" and its implications for social imaginaries on the information society and their paradoxical context. For more details, see Mansell, *Imagining the Internet*, 69ff.

users of technology). Accordingly, instead of only a few privileged programmers and policy-makers, many different individuals can influence the system, co-create information and value and, eventually, work together towards a better and more equal society. Therefore, it is equally correct to state that there are intrinsic benefits which follow from the emergent complexity in the technological system, because its decentralised nature makes it possible that every user can participate and, thus, contribute to greater control of the system. Since both these perspectives are justified, for Mansell, both those voices calling for policy interventions from above and below and those claiming that every intervention is harmful have validity, such that neither can be entirely discarded.<sup>22</sup> This results in a paradoxical situation that is common to all debates on the regulation of ICTs and the Internet.

In addition to the distinction between instrumental and critical research traditions, Mansell considers the paradox of complexity to be generated by the difference between exogenous and endogenous approaches to technological change and human agency. From an exogenous perspective, which is influenced by a techno-deterministic understanding deriving from cybernetic theory, technological change is conceived as autonomous from other spheres (like society, economy, culture and politics). Therefore, it can act upon these spheres as an external shock to which they have to adjust. According to Mansell, the common policy response deriving from this perspective is to trust the markets and individual choices to stimulate and guide innovation and the development of a technological system responsive to human needs. By contrast, the endogenous perspective sees links between the social, political, economic and the technical sphere. Hence, from this perspective, change in technology is considered to be interrelated with wider processes of change and influenced by the individuals who develop and use technology. Conversely, social transformations are not exclusively due to technological progress, but depend on other factors as well. Hence, according to Mansell, policy perspectives based on the endogenous model of change account for the role of human agency within this complex system of mutual modifications.<sup>23</sup>

The paradox of complexity and its relation to oppositional perspectives on technological change and human agency make it possible to frame the conflicts that UNESCO regularly encounters when discussing regulatory measures in a less ideological way. Just like the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 179ff.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 51; 177ff. For a detailed analysis of the influence of endogenous and exogenous models of change on the thinking of policy-makers, see also Robin Mansell, "Power and Interests in Information and Communication Technologies and Development: Exogenous and Endogenous Discourses in Contention", *Journal of International Development* 26, no. 1 (January 2014): 109-27.



paradox of information scarcity, the paradoxical situation related to the complexity of technological regulation did not appear for the first time during UNESCO's debates on the information society. Rather, it had already accompanied the organisation's activities in the field of information and communication since the first controversies between Western and Eastern member states in the first years of UNESCO's existence.<sup>24</sup> Later, the question of regulation also took centre stage in the NWICO debates, combined with other issues related to sovereignty, diversity, and geopolitical and economic concerns that went far beyond the field of media and information. It emerged once more in the context of UNESCO's intergovernmental information programmes, NATIS and later PGI. Part of these programmes was the idea of developing national information policies in UNESCO's member states, which would introduce centralised coordination for all information-related issues. These national information policies were intended to contribute to rendering all kinds of information widely available and putting it in the service of economic development. However, this initiative was criticised by some member states and experts, who considered it an intolerable governmental interference with the autonomous forces of the information economy.

The tensions between adherents and opponents of information policies grew more acute with the growing economic importance of digital technology and the Internet. Most prominently, they surfaced during the drafting process of IFAP's definitive documents and during the preparation of UNESCO's cyberspace recommendation. The impact that perspectives based on either the endogenous or exogenous model of change had on these tensions becomes clear if one once again considers the professional, practical and theoretical background of those actors involved in these two policy processes. Amongst the various experts and staff members, there were two predominant schools of thought: The first one consisted of IT professionals, including technological and economic experts, of whom many believed in the complex nature of technology and its dominance over other spheres, which made it difficult —if not impossible— to regulate it through public policies.<sup>25</sup> The other school consisted of information specialists —for example librarians

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<sup>24</sup> These controversies, many of them related to the introduction of mass media and communication as one of UNESCO's programme fields, were described in the historical chapter in Part I (see here page 58ff).

<sup>25</sup> This group included, for example, staff members or professional experts who previously had been involved in UNESCO's informatics programme, the IIP. Moreover, it was composed by IT experts such as Robert Kahn, one of the founding fathers of the Internet who attended the first INFOethics conference, and by representatives of the information economy, such as the publisher organisations involved in the drafting of UNESCO's cyberspace recommendation. Although they shared the exogenous perspective on technological change, these actors often had very little in common when it came to the resulting policy proposals.

and archivists— who believed that it is possible and necessary to master information technology and to regulate the informational environment in order to increase the availability and quality of information.<sup>26</sup>

The different schools of thought were also represented among UNESCO's member states. Many, although certainly not all Western countries followed a perspective based on neo-liberal economic thinking, which emphasised the importance of market-led initiatives and the self-regulating role of the private sector. By contrast, most developing and newly industrialised countries, and also many formerly communist countries, believed in a state-centred model of economic and technological regulation, in which public institutions hold a central role for planning, coordinating and, in large parts, financing the creation of information infrastructures.<sup>27</sup> Much like the opposed views on the value of information, these controversial perspectives on regulation were not simply motivated by economic and political interests or by unsubstantiated ideology. Instead, they were generated by the different ways of thinking about the complex nature of technological development and the role of human agency vis-à-vis economic and technological forces.

As a result, during the drafting process of the recommendation, paradoxical claims about the role that governments, public institutions and the community of information and Internet users should or should not play for fostering access to and diversity of information were constantly either opposed or combined in a way that could not satisfy any of the involved actors. The consequence was reflected in the discourse eventually inscribed in the recommendation's text, which, once more, tried to find the middle ground and, without giving any clear indications, mentioned both the responsibility of governments and of the private sector.

The two paradoxes, borrowed from Mansell and her reflections on competing perspectives on the information society, help to examine the debates on the value of information and the possibility of regulating the digital environment from a different perspective, and to better understand the beliefs and assumptions that underlie competing discourses. There is, however, another aspect of the discursive and political struggles that UNESCO had to face in the period under scrutiny which these two paradoxes cannot

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<sup>26</sup> This group was primarily composed of staff members and national experts who previously had been part of UNESCO's information programmes, PGI, NATIS and UNISIST. In addition, it included the many experts on information science, information ethics and information policy who took part in the INFOethics conferences, such as Rainer Kuhlen from the University of Constance, or Peter Canisius from the German UNESCO Commission.

<sup>27</sup> This difference between economy-centred and state-centred perspectives on regulation is also visible in the many policies regarding the information society and the information economy that were adopted by various countries during the 1990s. See Moore, "Policies for an Information Society".

fully account for: namely, the fact that tensions increased every time UNESCO tried to combine two different objectives in one policy document or, more generally, in its policy discourse. The discursive analysis of this thesis showed that these two objectives were, on the one hand, to improve the informational situation of the developing world by increasing the access to information and the quality of available information; and, on the other hand, to meet the challenges that all countries were facing in light of the increasing commercialisation of the informational environment.

In order to better understand why the combination of these two objectives was necessarily always artificial and could not but provoke tensions among countries, the existence of another paradox of the information society needs to be considered: the paradox of globalised networks. This paradox is linked to the global nature of digital information infrastructures, which during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century started to grow in size and complexity until they ultimately reached and interconnected all parts of the world. Thus, not only did the networks themselves become globalised; they also contributed to the general phenomenon of globalisation — although this should not be taken to imply that they were the only or the most crucial factor contributing to the economic, societal, political and cultural changes associated with globalisation. However, just as is the case with all other aspects of globalisation, globalised information networks, too, do not spread equally and do not affect all parts of the world in the same manner. In fact, while the spread of digital information networks has in some parts of the world resulted in an increasingly hyperconnected informational environment, which becomes more and more synchronised and delocalised, other countries and some parts of the world population have remained excluded from this environment. Yet, the excluded parts are nevertheless irrevocably affected by the changing nature of the informational environment, as they are by all other aspects of globalisation.<sup>28</sup> They are thus part of the globalised networks without being able to fully participate in and take advantage of the informational environment built on these networks.

Thus, in the context of international policy-making, the paradox of globalised networks consists in the fact that, on the one hand, a comprehensive policy approach that seeks to address the challenges triggered by the increasing pervasiveness of digital information infrastructures and their impact on all spheres of social life necessarily needs to be a

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<sup>28</sup> The expansion and function of global networks and their relation to social structures were first and best described in Manuel Castells' theory of the "network society". This paradox is therefore inspired by his theoretical reflections, most particular on his consideration of the global nature of networks and their structural feature of inclusion and exclusion. See, for instance, Manuel Castells, "Informationalism, Networks, And The Network Society: A Theoretical Blueprint", in *The Network Society: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Manuel Castells (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004), 22ff.

global approach; that is, it has to account for the inherently global nature of the digital information environment. At the same time, a comprehensive policy approach needs to acknowledge that there are inequalities in a globally networked society, with the result that not all countries are facing the same challenges and societal consequences. As such, it has to account for the different needs and requirements of countries affected by the globalised networks. A policy approach that tries to address both of these aspects is confronted with a paradoxical situation that is not easily overcome.

The paradox of globalised networks provides the basis for a better understanding of the situation that UNESCO faced when trying to formulate a policy discourse on the information society that was equally relevant and valid for each of its member states. Indeed, every time UNESCO addressed the gap between information-rich and information-poor countries and framed it as the main obstacle for a global information society, its discourse was of clear relevance for the developing countries among its member states, which were still excluded from the globalised information networks; however, it neglected the problems that other countries were facing in the digital environment. Yet, when the organisation focused more explicitly on socio-economic problems related to the balance between commercial and public interests in cyberspace, the discourse was, in theory, more broad, addressing general problems that concerned both developing and developed countries. Nevertheless, it was certainly less relevant to the developing world, which was still struggling with basic access problems, than to highly developed countries with more advanced information societies.

Alongside the paradox of information scarcity and the paradox of complexity, the different perspectives contributing to the paradox of globalised networks can also be partially attributed to the difference between research traditions and between exogenous and endogenous approaches to technological change and human agency. Indeed, many of the proposals that addressed the gap between countries that were considered “information rich” and those considered “information poor” framed the technological progress and the spread of digital information infrastructures as an exogenous factor, which was independent from other changing spheres. In order to keep up with more advanced information societies, developing countries had to adjust to this external factor. In accordance with instrumental research traditions, stimulating innovation and fostering the development of both national and international digital markets were often considered to be the ideal measures for this purpose.

Conversely, most proposals that tried to address more general questions, such as the value of information in an increasingly globalised information society, often emphasised the

links between the social, political, economic and technical spheres. Thus, technological change was seen to not only be influenced by changes in the all other spheres, but also as only one of the many factors to which the international community had to react. Many of these proposals were, in addition, inspired by critical research traditions, and, were therefore not guided by clear, goal-oriented objectives, but rather questioned the implications that innovation and technologies have for all members of society, at the global level. Accordingly, they tried to be attentive to the consequences that technological progress, economic growth and innovation have for social and cultural differences, and for the participation of all people in information society.

In contrast to the paradox of information scarcity and the paradox of complexity, the different perspectives underlying the paradox of globalised networks cannot be clearly attributed to particular actors or group of actors. Instead, as a result of the way in which development-oriented and socio-economic objectives were often combined in UNESCO's policy discourse, the different perspectives were often conflated. This increased the paradoxical nature of the situation, and made it even more difficult for UNESCO to formulate a coherent and comprehensive policy discourse that would both take a global perspective and consider the needs of all member states.

In distinction to the other two paradoxes considered above, UNESCO encountered the paradox of globalised networks for the first time in its history during the elaboration of its policy discourse on the information society. While the paradoxes of information scarcity and complexity had already shaped the policy debates in earlier periods, the effects of the Internet and other global information infrastructures first became apparent in the 1990s, which corresponds to the period in which UNESCO's policy discourse on the matter first emerged. Certainly, during the NWICO period and, for instance, the reform process of PGI, the information flows between countries and the growing expansion of media networks were among the issues that caused the most debates. At that time, however, the focus was less on the global interconnectedness of the informational environment and more on the problems of unilateral information flows and the threats they caused for national sovereignty and the homogenisation of culture. Accordingly, it was with the inception of its discourse on the information society that UNESCO, for the first time, had to leave behind the national concerns of its member states in order to account for the changes that the increasingly networked and delocalised informational environment brought about in all countries simultaneously. The stakeholders participating in WSIS were confronted with this same problem in 2003-2005; and in many regards, the paradox of globalised networks continues to dominate international policy debates on information and communication up to the present day. As such, it remains an inherent part of a world

that increasingly relies on information exchanges via digital networks for all spheres of social life.

All things considered, when examining the struggles that UNESCO encountered during its search for a policy response to the information society as the result of the paradoxes of complexity, information scarcity and globalised networks, it is possible to conceptualise them along different lines. Instead of considering them as confrontations between adherents of different ideologies or as a consequence of opposed world-views, it is possible to frame them as the result of a deep and unresolvable misunderstanding regarding the nature of information and technology and the global consequences of increasingly pervasive digital networks. For an intergovernmental organisation such as UNESCO, which regroups a large number of member states and consulting experts with different cultural, social and political backgrounds and diverging normative traditions, it appears nearly impossible to agree on a policy discourse which would not be contrary to some of the perspectives underlying the many paradoxes of the information society. Thus, the consensus concerning a few highly controversial emblematic issues that UNESCO's member states were able to reach with the adoption of an international instrument cannot be regarded as the success of some storylines over others. Instead, by partially overcoming the paradoxical nature of its subject, the consensus represented a synthesis of values and a balance of interests amongst actors from different backgrounds, inspired by different research traditions and models of change, and with varying beliefs regarding the behaviours which will lead to the well-being of society on a global scale.

#### **4. Analysing policy discourse “in the making” — final thoughts on the conceptual approach**

The micro-level observation and description of *how* the actors involved in UNESCO's policy processes were able to reach a consensus by partially overcoming the paradoxical nature of the information society was the focus of this thesis. Yet, the thesis never raised the question as to *why* the actors held the interests, ideas and beliefs they did, since this would have gone beyond the analysis of the performative and discursive dimension of UNESCO's search for a policy discourse on the information society. Instead, all analysis was led by a focus on the creation of policy discourse through the meaning-making capacities of actors involved in policy-making.

However, the difficulties that UNESCO encountered when searching for a consensus on its policy response to the information society showed that arguments alone were not enough to prevail over interests and power struggles between all involved actors. Thus, in order to describe *how* UNESCO created a policy discourse on the information society, the analysis could not remain limited to actors and arguments. It also needed to take into account the effect that interests and power relations had on the policy discourse. The empirical research results showed that the conceptual framework chosen for this thesis was flexible enough to include the assessment of interests and power on the micro-level. At the same time, the conceptual approach also appeared to have some shortcomings that could only be partially overcome, particularly regarding the impact of power relations on the macro-level.

Although the interests of actors were not introduced as an independent unit of analysis, the assessment of their impact was part of both the discursive analysis, based on Argumentative Discourse Analysis, and of the performative analysis, inspired by Actor-Network Theory. This assessment differed quite importantly from an analysis primarily focused on interests, of the kind frequently employed in political science or political economy approaches. These approaches often refer to material interests as explanatory forces below the surface of agency, and to structures which are objective and external to the discourse. Accordingly, interest-focused assessments rarely acknowledge that interests heavily depend on beliefs and hidden assumptions, or simply on the ideas of policy actors, and are shaped by the complex dynamics of policy-making on the micro-level. In contrast to these approaches, from a constructivist point of view of the kind adopted by this thesis, interests are just as subjective as ideas. They are generated by the beliefs of people and by the values that people attribute to certain aspects of the social world:

“Contrary to lay usage, interests are *not* the opposite of ideals or values. [...] [O]ne’s interests are shaped by one’s experiences. But one’s satisfaction with an experience is a function of what is ideally desired, a function of one’s values. Interests cannot be articulated without values. Far from (ideal) values being pitted against (material) interests, interests are unintelligible without a sense of values-to-be-realized. The interests to be realized by collaborative action are an expression of the actors’ values.”<sup>29</sup>

The values that various actors involved in UNESCO’s policy-making processes attributed to information were often explicitly mentioned in the debates, or were implicit in their practices and interactions. Hence, the interests based on these values could be assessed

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<sup>29</sup> Ernst B. Haas, *When Knowledge Is Power: Three Models of Change in International Organizations* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), 2.

through the analysis of arguments and the strategies of actors, drawing on the conceptual tools of both ADA and ANT.

The assessment of power relations was equally part of the performative and discursive analysis. In order to analyse how actors were able to structure UNESCO's official policy according to their interests and ideas, and how they succeeded in inscribing this discourse into official policy texts, the research focused explicitly on the distribution and relations of power within the observed actor-network. It thereby used the tools and the vocabulary that ANT provides for analysing and describing these temporary institutional power relationships and the actors' efforts to create and stabilise them.

In addition, the thesis followed ANT's constructivist and relationalist approach, which considers the power relations among actors to be the result of the actor-network and its dynamics. Accordingly, the description of the performative dimension avoided referring to the power position of actors as an external cause for their behaviour or influence, as is often done within research approaches that look, for instance, at the reflection of geopolitical power struggles on the micro-level. Instead, the empirical analysis of UNESCO's policy discourse creation followed the idea that an actor's importance and power could only be described as the result of his position in the actor-network and of his capacity to convince other actors to share his ideas and interests.

However, the main difficulty for analysing the role of interests and power in UNESCO's policy processes was that an ANT-inspired approach does not allow the observer to refer to influences that did not emerge from the observation itself. In particular, ANT's originators refused to make reference to geopolitical or material interests which might explain the behaviour of actors and their arguments, but which cannot be observed in the processes under scrutiny. Correspondingly, ANT also denies the existence of overarching power structures, and criticises the idea of a powerful actor who is able to dominate other actors in the network due to its particular power position, which cannot be explained through the observed process. Moreover, it refuses to take into account any kind of *a priori* knowledge about the relationship and interests of actors. The reason is quite simple: For ANT, anything that cannot be observed does not exist.

While this postulation helped to set the boundaries of the empirical research in order to limit the elements to be considered in the performative and discursive analysis, it nonetheless caused several practical problems:

First of all, the method of restricting the description to what can be observed represents a problem for historical research. In fact, instead of being able to observe UNESCO's creation of a policy discourse on the information society in real-time, the research for this



thesis needed to rely on written and oral sources. This meant that not all material that might have been necessary for a comprehensive description was available or accessible, which led to an incomplete picture of the observed processes.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, ANT's refusal to consider external causes also poses a problem for the analysis of complex and opaque policy-making processes, in which many exchanges between actors take place behind closed doors or, quite to the contrary, in corridors between the official meetings. For these exchanges, no written records exist. Their observation is only possible via the personal accounts of those who took part in these exchanges or had first-hand information about them. But the observation of past processes through interviews can never be as direct as the personal observation. All interviewees necessarily added elements to their personal accounts, which included either information about the involved actors and processes or explanations for their behaviour that would not have emerged from their direct observation.

As a consequence, not all elements that could have given indications about the influence of interests and power relations on the observed processes could be taken into account. The descriptions necessarily remained incomplete, taking it for granted that there were actors, practices, ideas and arguments that might have had an impact on UNESCO's policy response to the information society but did not surface during the assessment of the performative and discursive dimension of the three episodes under scrutiny.

While little can be done to solve the problems related to the ANT-inspired observation of past policy processes, there are ways to overcome the difficulty of including influential aspects that go beyond the concrete policy processes under scrutiny. The solution consists in making use of the flexibility of the actor-network, which is not a fixed object, but rather is constructed through its own description. Thus, the boundaries of the described network can be expanded in order to include influential aspects that emerged from the observation but needed further background information to illustrate their relevance. In this thesis, this was done through the description of the general, thematic and organisational context of the three episodes of UNESCO's policy response, such as the history of the general policy debate on cultural diversity or UNESCO's work related to ethics in fields other than information and communication. The selection of the contextual elements to be described, however, emerged from the observation of the performative and discursive dimension. Hence, their description did not represent an additional, external layer of background information and explanation but was simply part

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<sup>30</sup> The difficulties with accessing or finding all relevant records in the UNESCO Archives and on websites that have been taken offline are described in detail in Part II (see here page 181ff).

of the description of a larger actor-network, in which the three policy processes under scrutiny constituted a smaller network influenced by the larger one.

This is precisely the approach that Latour proposes for the consideration of power relations. If the effects of power and the relations within the observed actor-network cannot be explained in terms of the observed elements and processes, for Latour, this means that the network and its description were not large enough:

“The explanation emerges once the description is saturated. We can certainly continue to follow actants, innovations, and translation operations through other networks, but we will never find ourselves forced to abandon the task of description to take up that of explanation. [...] There is no need to go searching for mysterious or global causes outside networks. If something is missing it is because the description is not complete.”<sup>31</sup>

For the observation of intergovernmental policy-making in an international organisation such as UNESCO, the observed actor-network had to be extended beyond the processes and the period under scrutiny in order to be able to take into account the historical relationships of member states and NGOs with the organisation. But it would have to be extended even further, far beyond UNESCO and the interactions taking place within the organisation, in order to account for geopolitical tensions amongst governments or for the impact of socio-economic imbalances between countries. Yet, if the actor-network needs to be expanded continuously in order to observe elements and actors that make it possible to better describe the power relations in the network, how far would it have to go before it could account for what other approaches would refer to as the overarching power structures?

The existence of such structures is denied by Latour and other ANT-authors.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the difficulty of ANT-inspired approaches for the study of policy discourse creation does not consist in avoiding *why*-questions about the origins of power and interests, since *how*-questions about their effects on the observed network are sufficient to analyse the micro-level dynamics. Rather, the difficulty consists in deciding where to set the boundaries of the observed actor-network in order to account for the effects of power on the macro-level without breaking with ANT's core principles.

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<sup>31</sup> Bruno Latour, “Technology is Society Made Durable”, in *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology, and Domination*, ed. John Law (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 129f.

<sup>32</sup> For a similar criticism of ANT's approach to power relations and its denial of overarching power structures, see Teurlings, “Dating Shows and the Production of Identities: Institutional Practices and Power in Television Production”, 78.

# CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

The year 2015 is certainly a good year to look back at the history of UNESCO's activities in the field of communication and information. It is not only the year in which UNESCO celebrates 70 years of existence as the intellectual organisation of the United Nations. It is also the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the organisation's Sector for Communication and Information. Although it carried the name Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics from 1990 until 2001, the current form of the sector was founded back in 1990 in an attempt to leave behind the politicised debates about new world orders and to account for the increasing convergence of formerly separate policy fields.

Moreover, the year is marked by the 10 year-review of the implementation of the WSIS objectives and the preparation of a post-2015 agenda for the information society (a process referred to as WSIS+10). Despite the fact that ITU rather than UNESCO served as the main organiser of the original world summit back in 2003-2005, UNESCO was involved in both the event and the implementation of its objectives. The organisation was given responsibility for six out of eleven action lines, all of them closely linked to its mandate in the field of information and communication.<sup>1</sup> Hence, in revising these action lines and reviewing the progress achieved over the last ten years, UNESCO had to reflect once more on its role in an increasingly globalised and networked society, in which the informational environment is becoming more and more synchronised and delocalised.

Part of this reflection was the presentation of a large study on Internet-related issues in UNESCO's fields of competence, which is the fourth and final reason making the year 2015 an interesting moment to analyse UNESCO's approach to issues related to digital technology. This study on "Internet Universality", which was presented and discussed during an international conference in March 2015, highlighted four themes of particular importance on which UNESCO should focus in the future: access to information, freedom of expression, privacy and ethics. It is striking that these were issues that had already been at the centre of UNESCO's reflection on the information society during the

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<sup>1</sup> The six action lines are: Access to information and knowledge, E-learning, E-science, Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content, Media, and Ethical dimensions of the Information Society. For more details, see <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/unesco-and-wsis/implementation-and-follow-up/unesco-and-wsis-action-lines/> (last accessed 21 September 2015).

period under scrutiny in this thesis. Both access to information and ethical questions were at the heart of the debates between UNESCO, its member states and professional communities during the 1990s. In addition, privacy was among the topics of UNESCO's first strategy papers about the information highways and of the INFOethics conference series, where it had been discussed under the overarching emblematic issue of information ethics. Only the issue of "freedom of expression" is a new addition to the list of Internet-related issues that UNESCO should prioritise. During the period analysed in this thesis, this issue was exclusively dealt with by a different division of the CI Sector than the one in charge of the INFOethics conferences, IFAP's foundation and the preparation on cyberspace, and did not appear prominently in the resulting discourse on the information society.

There are three main reasons that can explain the neglect of questions related to freedom of expression and to communication in general during the three episodes under scrutiny in this thesis:

First of all, although the purpose of creating the CII Sector in 1990 was to regroup all activities related to communication, information and informatics within a common organisation structure, the three strands of activity converged only partially. While UNESCO's information and informatics projects were soon considered to be part of one common field of activity, all communication activities continued to be discussed and planned separately, within a parallel division and in cooperation with different groups of academic and professional experts.

Secondly, shortly after the NWICO debate and the crisis it had caused for UNESCO due to the withdrawal of the United States, the United Kingdom and Singapore, all media-related issues continued to be considered difficult, if not dangerous topics. Their inclusion in the debate on the information society certainly would have caused even more tensions than those observed in this thesis. Hence, their neglect could be viewed as a strategic exclusion intended to avoid the association of the information society debates with the NWICO controversies.

Thirdly, due to the early stage of Internet technology and usage, communication-related activities were less prominent as policy problems during the 1990s. At that time, the level of interactivity that the Internet allowed for was limited to the bilateral exchange of emails and files and the unilateral creation of content on static websites. It was first with the arrival of Web 2.0 applications in the early 2000s, that communication on and via the Internet increased significantly thanks to the collaborative use of social networking sites, blogs, sharing websites, virtual communities and the creation of user-generated content. Accordingly, it was only then that the technological convergence resulted in the closer

integration of both communication and information-related policy issues within UNESCO.

Besides the inclusion of freedom of expression issues, there is another difference between UNESCO's most recent policy initiative related to the Internet and the elaboration of its policy discourse on the information society during the 1990s. The difference is equally related to changes that occurred during the last decade, but has less to do with digital technology than with the policy-making procedures related to them. During the processes analysed in this thesis, UNESCO elaborated and negotiated its policy response to the information society in a traditional intergovernmental manner. This also included the UNESCO-specific involvement of professional communities, which is quite unique in the UN system. However, during the World Summit and its preparatory conference, this form of decision-making, which is commonplace for international organisations and yet liable to strike outsiders as opaque, was challenged by members and institutions of civil society, who called for a multi-stakeholder format for policy-making about the Internet and all related policy issues. In the end, technical experts, civil society and business representatives were allowed to take part in the consultations and exchanges preceding the final decision-making which, in return, remained in hands of governmental representatives. Ever since, debates on policy issues related to the Internet and digitalisation have increasingly been carried out in the form of deliberative processes with the participation of multiple actors. UNESCO's most recent initiative also implemented the multi-stakeholder format: The UNESCO Secretariat not only organised several open consultation processes and a big international conference to seek input and discuss the different drafts of the "Internet Universality" concept and the related study. In addition, representatives of civil society, the private sector and the technical community were included in the negotiation and adoption of the outcome document of the final conference, alongside governmental representatives of member states.<sup>2</sup> Thereby, UNESCO chose a fundamentally different approach to the one employed during the three episodes analysed in this thesis, in which only selected representatives of the professional and academic organisations holding official relations with UNESCO and the civil society members of UNESCO's National Commission were allowed to consult and comment. Moreover, at that time, these groups were excluded from the final negotiations and decision-making, which remained in the hands of governments.

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<sup>2</sup> The outcome document of UNESCO's „Connecting the Dots" conference was adopted on 4 March 2015. See [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/outcome\\_document.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/outcome_document.pdf) (last accessed 21 September 2015).

Today, 10 years after WSIS, multi-stakeholder discussions at international meetings such as the Internet Governance Forum and other forms of inclusive and deliberative policy-making have not completely replaced the traditional decision-making processes in international communication. Nonetheless, they have fundamentally affected the way in which policy processes occur, and have altered the expectations that non-governmental actors have regarding their own role in these processes and their capacity to influence decisions. As a result, in the post-WSIS environment, the internal workings of the black box of international policy-making and discourse creation regarding the Internet became even more complex: the box now includes an even higher number of actors, belonging to a larger range of different groups; the rules of consultation processes and decision-making are less stable, as they are themselves often the subject of negotiations; and the multiple ideas and arguments that influence the creation of policy discourse and its inscription into documents are more diverse, and their origins even more difficult to retrace.

For these reasons, the period in between the start of international policy debates on the information society in the early 1990s and their culmination in the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003-2005 is not only an ideal period to analyse the creation of UNESCO's policy discourse because it was during this short moment in time that UNESCO developed new ideas and narratives that characterise its policy approach until today, as the topics of the "Internet Universality" initiative confirmed. Furthermore, it also was one of the last occasions in which the creation of a policy discourse about the societal impact of digital technologies within an intergovernmental organisation could be observed, before the debate was opened up to the larger stakeholder community during WSIS and subsequent policy fora. Thus, it is by scrutinising this particular period that the concrete dynamics of intergovernmental policy-making can best be observed in order to contribute to the better understanding of competing discourses on the cultural, social and economic challenges posed by the growing digitalisation of society.

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Hector, Paul. Personal interview, Paris, 8 November 2013.  
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### 3. Web archives

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- <https://web.archive.org/web/20000410164721/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/infoethics/infoethics1.htm> (last accessed 2 October 2015).
- It contains all contributions and documents related to the first INFOethics conference (10-12 March 1997).

Web archive “INFOethics 1998”:

- [http://www.unesco.org/webworld/infoethics\\_2/index.htm](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/infoethics_2/index.htm) (last accessed 2 October 2015).
- It contains all contributions and documents related to the second INFOethics conference (1-3 October 1998).

Web archive “INFOethics 2000”:

- <http://webworld.unesco.org/infoethics2000/> (last accessed 2 October 2015).
- It contains all contributions and documents related to the third INFOethics conference (13-15 November 2000).

Web archive “IFAP consultation”:

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20001007024442/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/contribute.shtml> (last accessed 2 October 2015)
- It contains all comments submitted during the first and second consultation process about IFAP (February 1999–August 2000).

Web archive “IFAP Drafts”:

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20001203163900/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/history.shtml#3> (last accessed 2 October 2015).

- It contains the early draft versions of IFAP's definitive documents (February 2000-July 1999).

Web archive "IFAP Ad-Hoc Working Group":

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20001203163900/http://www.unesco.org/webworld/future/history.shtml#2> (last accessed 2 October 2015).
- It contains the comments of the Ad-Hoc Working Group for IFAP (May 1999).

## APPENDICES



## Appendix 1: List of interviewees

### **Alain Modoux**

*Personal interview (in French), on 26 November 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland.*

Alain Modoux was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat between 1989 and 2001. He served as Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information Sector between February 2000 and July 2001.

### **Axel Plathe**

*Personal interview (in German), on 8 November 2013 in Paris, France.*

Axel Plathe has been a member of the UNESCO Secretariat since 1988 and currently serves as Director of the UNESCO Office in Iraq. Between 1993 and 2006, he was a Programme Specialist in UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector.

### **Dietrich Schüller**

*Personal interview (in German), on 15 November 2013 in Paris, France*

Dietrich Schüller is an Austrian specialist in audiovisual preservation and restoration. As the director of the *Phonogrammarchiv* of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, he was a member of the Bureau of PGI's Intergovernmental Council, of IFAP's Ad-Hoc Working Group and of IFAP's Intergovernmental Council.

### **Divina Frau-Meigs**

*Email interview (in English and French), on 6 August 2015.*

Divina Frau-Meigs is a professor of American Studies and Media Sociology at the Université Paris 3-Sorbonne. As a media expert, she served as the French representative to IFAP and as a representative of IAMCR, an NGO holding official observer status at UNESCO.

## **Françoise Rivière**

*Personal interview (in French), on 9 March 2015 in Paris, France.*

Françoise Rivière was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat from 1981 until 2013, where she served, among other positions, as Director of the Bureau of Studies and Programming, Assistant Director-General for Culture, and Executive Director of the Office of the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura.

## **Georges Dupont**

*Personal interview (in French), on 18 November 2013 in Paris, France.*

Georges Dupont is a former staff member of UNESCO and ITU who served as the liaison person between the organisations during the World Summit on the Information Society.

## **Henrikas Yushkiavitshus**

*Personal interview (in English), on 23 February 2015 in Paris, France.*

Henrikas Yushkiavitshus was the Assistant Director-General for UNESCO's Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics between 1990 and 2000.

## **Jane Wright**

*Personal interview (in English), on 11 September 2014 in Paris, France.*

Jane Wright was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat between 1968 and 2003. Between 1990 and 1998, she served as secretary for the Assistant Director-General for Communication, Information and Informatics, Henrikas Yushkiavitshus.

## **Milagros del Corral**

*Email interview (in English), on 27 February 2015.*

Milagros del Corral was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat between 1990 and 2005. Among other positions, she served as Director of the Division for Cultural Industries and Copyright and Deputy Assistant Director-General for Culture.



## **Paul Hector**

*Personal interview (in English), on 8 November 2013 in Paris, France.*

Paul Hector joined the UNESCO Secretariat in November 2000. He is a Programme Specialist in the Knowledge Society Division of the Sector for Communication and Information and was involved in the follow-up of the INFOethics conferences.

## **Peter Canisius**

*Personal Interview (in German), on 16 September 2014 in Cologne, Germany.*

Peter Canisius is the former President of the German Commission for UNESCO. He was involved in PGI's Intergovernmental Council, served as Chairperson for UNESCO's second INFOethics conference in 1998 and was as a member of IFAP's Ad-Hoc Working Group.

## **Philippe Quéau**

*Personal interview (in French), on 25 April 2013 in Paris, France.*

Philippe Quéau was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat between 1996 and 2014. From 1996 to 2003, he served as Director of the Division of Information and Informatics (later Information Society Division) within the Communication and Information Sector.

## **René Cluzel**

*Personal interview (in French), on 22 April 2014 in Paris, France.*

René Cluzel is a former staff member of UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector. Having joined UNESCO in 1987, he was involved in the organisation's Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP) since its early days.

## **Ronald Koven**

*Personal interview (in English), on 24 February 2015 in Paris, France.*

Ronald Koven has been the European Representative of the World Press Freedom Committee since 1981, an NGO holding official observer status at UNESCO. In this

capacity, he covered press freedom concerns during the INFOethics conference and the preparation of UNESCO's 2003 recommendation on cyberspace.

### **Verena Metze-Mangold**

*Personal Interview (in German), on 16 September 2014 in Bonn, Germany.*

Verena Metze-Mangold is the current president of the German Commission for UNESCO. As the media expert of the commission, she participated in UNESCO's INFOethics conferences in 1997 and 1998, and observed the creation of IFAP and the preparation of the 2003 recommendation on cyberspace.

### **Victor Montviloff**

*Personal interview (in English and French), on 21 October 2013 in Paris, France.*

Victor Montviloff was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat between 1973 and 2002. As a Programme Specialist in Information and Informatics, he worked closely with Philippe Quéau on the organisation of the INFOethics conference series, the establishing of IFAP and the preparation the recommendation on cyberspace.

### **Yves Courrier**

*Personal interview (in French), on 20 February 2014 in Paris, France;*

*Phone interview (in French), on 2 September 2014 in Paris, France.*

Yves Courrier was a member of the UNESCO Secretariat from 1978 to 2004. As a Programme Specialist for Information, he was involved in PGI and in the publication of UNESCO's World Reports on Communication and Information. Between 2002 and 2004, he was seconded to ITU in Geneva for the preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society.

## Appendix 2: “Organisational setting for communication and information within UNESCO”

| Time       | Name of Sector  | UNESCO Director-General                   |
|------------|---|---|
| 1946-1967  | Department of / Sector for Mass Communication         | Julian Huxley, UK (1946-48)               |
|            |   | Jaime Torres Bodet, Mexico (1948-52)      |
|            |   | John W. Taylor, US (1952-1953; acting DG) |
|            |   | Luther Evans, US (1953-58)                |
|            |   | Vittorino Veronese, Italy (1958-61)       |
|            |   | René Maheu, France (1962-74)              |
| 1967-1976  | Sector for Communication                              | Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Senegal (1974-87)    |
| 1977-1982  | Sector for Culture and Communication                  |   |
| 1982-1987  | Sector for Communication                              |   |
| 1987-1990  | Sector for Culture and Communication                  | Federico Mayor, Spain (1987-99)           |
| 1990-2000  | Sector for Communication, Information and Informatics | Koïchiro Matsuura, Japan (1999-2009)      |
|            |   |   |
| 2000-today | Sector for Communication and Information              | Irina Bokova, Bulgaria (2009-today)       |
|            |   |   |



## Appendix 3: Selected UNESCO documents

**Appendix 3.1:** “UNESCO and an Information Society for All. A position paper”, prepared by UNESCO in May 1996.

**Appendix 3.2:** “The Information Society Programme. Envisioning the Future”, 1<sup>st</sup> draft for IFAP’s definitive documents prepared by Marianne Scott on 26 April 1999.

**Appendix 3.3:** “Information For All Programme”, last version of IFAP’s definitive documents as adopted on 2 October 2000 (included in 160 EX/17 Rev.).

**Appendix 3.4:** “Preliminary report on the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, sent out to member states on 15 December 2000.

**Appendix 3.5:** “Draft recommendation concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace”, final version of the recommendation text, adopted during the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference on 15 October 2003 (included in 32 C/27 Annex I).

These appendixes are not included in the document made available online.

