

# Communicating Civil Society: participation as the main benchmark of Civil Society Media. The case of the III World Social Forum.

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## ABSTRACT.

*Communication is a key resource in the process of development and reproduction of the organized civil society. The third World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre in January 2003, marked a turning point in that process: civil society organisations involved in the World Social Forum acknowledged for the first time the intrinsic relationship between media and social change, creating in the context of the forum a space for the discussion of communication in a broader sense. This growing interest has been confirmed in the following edition and in the national and regional fora.*

*In an effort to disseminate information about their events and instances, several civil society groups, even those participating in the social fora, developed their own communication channels, which have been described as alternative, independent, collective or community media. They represent a different approach to media based on “being the media” instead of consuming them. I combined all these definitions under the term **Civil Society Media**: a broader concept that enables us to define media shifting from the concept of audience and users to the concept of civil society, from individuals as passive recipients to active subjects in a human-centred approach to media. In these terms I define participation as the most important characteristic of civil society media.*

*I have developed a classification of civil society media covering the third World Social Forum, which allows assessing how, if and on which terms participation has become a reality in the production of information by the CS. The classification focuses on their form, paying special attention to their use of information technologies (ICTs). I applied the classification to a number of case studies —Indymedia, the World Association of Community Radio (AMARC) and Ciranda— taken from my more extensive research project on civil society media at the WSF.*

*In chapter 1 I frame civil society communication, by defining Civil Society Media. In chapter 2 I describe the context in which Civil Society Media operate in order to evaluate their performance: the third World Social Forum, a crucial event in the development process of a social agenda in the field of communications. In chapter 3 I outline a classification that allows to determine if and in which terms participation has become a reality in the production of information by civil society. The aim is to understand if and how the proposals drafted at the World Social Forum —and encompassed under the slogan ‘another communication is possible’— have been put into practice and understand how we can define participation within the civil society communication.*

## FRAMING CIVIL SOCIETY COMMUNICATION.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Civil Society between local and global.

The concept of civil society (CS) has been filled with a myriad of meanings by different people at different times, and today there are still ambivalent definitions. Given the lack of consensus, the concept remains ambiguous and vague, while at the same time it is used as a common platform for ideas, projects and policy proposals to be shared by a variety of actors. I have adopted a structural interpretation of civil society as the sphere of relationships between individuals, groups and organizations situated between the state, the family and the business world. It includes non-profit organisations, associations and social movements that are distinct from both state establishment and market institutions. The concept of **civil society as the non-state and non-business realm** is strongly based on the interpretation of Antonio Gramsci, who refused for the first time to consider economic interactions as part of civil society.<sup>2</sup> Civil society can be seen as a subject opposed to and autonomous from the state: it is the circle of social and political conflicts. But at the same time it may become a substitute for the state and the market and take over some of their traditional functions. Different parts of civil society focus on different objectives and practices —change or stability, advocacy or service provision, struggle or consent generation—. My structural definition takes into account its multifaceted nature. It includes what Mary Kaldor calls the “activist” or “post-Marxist” version of civil society, which aims at a redistribution of power, a radicalisation of democracy, an extension of participation and autonomy, and which is based on active citizenship and social movements, as well as what she calls the “neoliberal” version of civil society —a non-profit voluntary “third sector” which provides a substitute for many functions traditionally performed by the state, for example in the field of welfare—.<sup>3</sup> Despite their differences in both structures and aims, all these organisations and movements tend to share a common set of values: discontent with state paternalism and the power of large institutions, and a tendency towards self-organisation, autonomy, pluralism, voluntary association and horizontal networks. Driven by a concern for social development and public interest, they put an emphasis on issues such as environmental degradation, human rights, civil justice, poverty eradication, racism and sexism.

Considering the current globalization of civil society identities and practices, many observers have adopted the notion of a “**global civil society**” as an interpretative category of the dynamics of social integration at a world level. Some claim that this global network is gradually becoming a transnational political actor,<sup>4</sup> a territorially unbounded force including many “civil societies” sharing the same values. The concept refers to the existence of a social sphere beyond local and national societies, which “both feeds on and react to globalisation”.<sup>5</sup> It may be seen as the expression of a consciousness and “as an aspiration to reach and include citizens everywhere and to enable them to think and act as global citizens”.<sup>6</sup> Others are more cautious about the concept of a global civil society as a unitary actor, claiming it is merely a collection of separated movements, groups and organisations with different histories, identities and tactics.<sup>7</sup> A third group agrees on the concept of an international civil society<sup>8</sup> representing the leading force of a globalisation from below<sup>9</sup> —the civil society response to neo-liberal globalisation,<sup>10</sup> a sort of “counterweight”—<sup>11</sup> with an agenda that transcends national borders but does not (yet) have an homogeneous identity. Keeping in mind its indeterminateness, I refer to the term “global civil society” as a synonymous of “transnational/international civil society”: a wide range

of non-state and non-business groups, some of them with converging agendas, representing both the sources of resistance to the neoliberal globalization and the domain of values that need to be safeguarded against the overwhelming power of global markets. This operative definition resembles the use of the term “global civil society” within the social fora movement, which is the focus of this research.

## 2. Civil society communication: the role of ICTs.

The transnationalisation of civil society has its basis on the growth of resources that have facilitated the communication between different actors on a global scale. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations, as well as social movements, have a strong commitment in spreading outside their instances, in promoting the widest possible exchange of critical information between members and in encouraging the civil society networking at international level. Several sociologists have underlined the centrality of communication in the reproduction of civil society, as well as in its activities and strategies. Between them, Melucci pointed out the socio-cultural identity of the so-called new social movements, mobilized around cultural values.<sup>12</sup> They challenge the current production of information, symbols and social relationship models. Communication, both internal between members and external to the whole civil society, is a crucial phase of social change.<sup>13</sup> Keck and Sikkink identified the information exchange as the outstanding activity of what they call “transnational advocacy networks”.<sup>14</sup> They are communicative structures which work mainly through the production and creative usage of critical information —these strategies are called “information politics”—. Furthermore Castells defined the anti-globalisation movement struggling for cultural changes within the society as a network based on the Internet.<sup>15</sup>

Even if communication flows were possible without the new information devices, the so-called Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have largely empowered civil society communication. Internet is a sort of ‘facilitator’ of civil society activities. It has radically changed the access to information resources and to the global arenas.<sup>16</sup> It amplifies and economizes communication, providing a favourable environment to the development of a transnational civil society, enabling the linkages between different actors in different places, including in the transnational exchange even groups with limited human or financial resources. It makes collective action possible on a transnational scale and drives public opinion’s attention even to marginal struggles or geographically decentralized protests. In these terms, it is a tool both for internal communication and networking between members, and for external communication towards public opinion. In this framework, Internet empowers the creation of a wide range of civil society channels, which can alter information flows provided by mainstream media, reaching the public opinion bypassing the gate-keeping filters of the traditional media.<sup>17</sup> But Internet is not only a communication space for civil society. It also furnishes the material support for a new social morphology: the network.<sup>18</sup> Internet enables a global network-building process based on flexibility, decentralization and horizontality —even if it does not have an intrinsic democratizing effect—. The network as an organizational model can assure interconnectivity which permits a wide exchange of information in real time and transcending distance and borders.

Framing civil society communication, I have focused on ICTs and on the growth of a “virtual” transnational civil society based on an Internet-driven information exchange because with the venue of those technologies the possibility of participation in political and social life by civil

society dramatically exploded. But we should keep in mind that not all people worldwide have the same access to ICTs: new technologies not always mean new real possibilities. The main obstacle is the so-called ‘digital divide’, which complicates the already existing divides in terms of education, income and social differences.<sup>19</sup> Also the government regulation, often established as a response to corporations’ requests or for security reasons, and the control over information flows—sometimes so aggressive to become a real censorship—are tough obstacles to the appropriation of ICTs for social usage.

### 3. CS Media – definition and examples.

Civil society needs to communicate its values, issues and events, but mainstream media—both commercial and public channels—do not seem to be able to interpret and report on them properly. But civil society has developed its own communication channels, using traditional means such as radio and photocopied newsletters or ‘new media’ as e-mails, lists and web-sites. These CS Media have been described in different names and forms: community, independent or alternative media. Micro or middle-size media that distribute information on a particular theme, or are produced by a certain sector of society, represent the social re-appropriation of a space that is denied by the mainstream sector. They often are experimentation grounds of horizontal practices of communication not mediated by traditional filters. They are expression of civil society needs, covering issues of concern of civil society. Within their organizations, they challenge the usual race, gender and youth dynamics both in term of content and process: they not only represent the voices of the non-elites, but give them access to the information production. I combine all these forms of communication in the term Civil Society Media.<sup>20</sup> It is a broader concept that permits to define media shifting from the concept of audience and users to the concept of civil society: from individuals as passive recipients of information ‘from above’ to active subjects in the communication processes. It permits a **human-centred approach to media**, rather than a commercial one. This category comprises all the ‘third sector media’, excluding commercial and public service media while encompassing media organisations, groups, and projects which fit into the basic non-state non-commercial model<sup>21</sup> and which share the structural and thematic tendencies of civil society. The concept of CS Media embraces a wide range of media actors, from small grassroots media projects to large media organisations, from a photocopied bulletin to an activist website as Indymedia, from pirate televisions and free radios to the global news agency Inter Press Service (IPS). There can be vast differences between individual entities, but there is a tendency towards a set of common features which offers a clear framework and unveils the differences to the media model described before—even if not all of them share all these features at the same degree—. They call for autonomy and decentralization, participation, horizontal relations and respect for differences, as opposed to mainstream media verticality, manipulation and control, therefore representing a clear alternative to the traditional communication flows. They are placed in a tension line between concentration and openness, horizontality and hierarchy, commercial aims and nonprofit and between a single dominant culture and a wide range of people’s cultures.

**Participation** is the most important feature of CS media. Whereas traditional commercial and public service media are operating according to a one-way flow of information from sender to receiver, CS Media break the boundaries between active producers and passive consumers. Internet has opened up great potential to create the most varied communication initiatives. Its

decentralized architecture and low operating costs enable the access to news and news sources without requiring professional skills. In this sense, CS Media represent a different approach to media based on “being the media” instead of consuming them. CS Media **horizontality** and **decentralisation** establish comfortable environments where diversities are respected and taken into consideration as expression of communities’ peculiarities. Giving voice to those communities and therefore reclaiming public space denied by the mainstream centralised structures, CS Media represent for many people in the Global South the only channel of expression. But not only their structures are different from the mainstream model: also their contents represent a strong civil society reaction to the single homogeneous conception of the world presented in most of corporate media. They provide **alternative views over the world**, by addressing trends like development, human rights, poverty and environmental degradation, questioning people about the disruptions and inequalities in modern societies and motivating them to deal with such issues themselves. They pay more attention to processes influencing people’s life in the framework of a global solidarity, rather than emphasising few sensationalistic events. Many of those media explicitly bring forward **subjective accounts** of events breaking with traditional journalistic values of a fair and accurate reporting. As they regard the concept of objectivity as questionable, often they are seen as a constitutive part of social movements and make their involvement explicit. Moreover, CS Media promote a broad circulation of knowledge and critical information. Often they are connected each other, and to social movements or civil society organizations, in **networks**, to share their materials challenging the commercial definition of intellectual property rights.

## **CS MEDIA AT THE THIRD WORLD SOCIAL FORUM: PROPOSALS FOR A PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION.**

### **1. The WSF as a new kind of public space for debates in communication.**

The idea of a civil society forum arose in 2000, when a few activists from Brazil and France imagined a space where common people from all over the world could autonomously meet to create a vision of alternative development to the neo-liberal globalisation model. This forum would represent the civil society response to the international decision-making arenas, as the UN summits, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the traditional intergovernmental processes. Its challenge was to **develop the civil society independent agenda** on the main hot issues such as sustainable development and environment, human rights and cultural diversity, democracy and peace: firstly working out a vision of ‘another possible world’ and then framing the strategies of action through an inclusive and pluralistic process, respecting the identities of the groups involved. The first edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) was held in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as a symbolic break with the World Economic Forum (WEF), an annual informal summit on the world economy which had been taking place in Davos, Switzerland, since 1971. From 2001, social fora as a new kind of public space started to spread over the continents: several regional and local fora were organized, gathering each time more people, as well as many thematic fora on particular themes —education, human rights, drugs trade—. From 2002 social fora began to be conceived as a permanent process of debate and network-

ing and to be definitely recognized globally as ‘the’ space of reflection of civil society in the broadest sense.

The social forum was born as a ‘counter-summit’, but in a couple of years it has become autonomous from the official event: a ‘counter-summit without the summit.’ It faces the same issues of the official summits, but with a critical perspective. It has three main aims: the construction of global networks, the spread of critical information and the proposal of alternative policies.<sup>22</sup> Social fora contribute to the creation of the non institutional arenas which serve to social movements to articulate their political requests. They can be considered a constituent of the social movements’ ‘cries’, through which they speak to the whole civil society to influence indirectly the official decision-making agenda<sup>23</sup>—but keeping in mind that not bringing demands to governments but creating alternatives is the social fora main objective—. The peculiarity of social fora as an alternative arena stands in three elements. It is one of the first transnational self-organized civil society events with such large participation and big echo: it originated from the needs of civil society which decided to meet autonomously, far from the ‘buttons rooms’ and on a global scale. Secondly, its nature of open space for discussion where analysis and strategies are based on a North-South consensus.<sup>24</sup> In this sense social fora represent an ‘epistemology of the South’:<sup>25</sup> an attempt to ‘rewrite’ the knowledge on a different basis, not guided and controlled exclusively but the so-called Global North. Thirdly, decisions within the social fora are adopted through a decision-making process different from the democratic method, where the majority wins; it is a participative horizontal technique based not on the ‘lowest common denominator’ but on consensus. Social fora do not produce final statements and it is not deliberative in nature, according to its Charter of Principles,<sup>26</sup> the WSF’s guiding document. They bring together civil society organizations and movements on a transnational scale, but do not pretend to represent the world civil society. Again, social fora refuse any kind of structures of representation: no one is allowed to express positions on behalf of the forum assuming to represent all participants, to safeguard the internal pluralism. However, the system of social fora provides for some loose structures—inclusive and open to everyone, according to the fora’s guiding principles—in charge of leading the social fora development. The leader body is the International Council (IC), set up in 2001 among networks, movements and organisations with accumulated experience in the criticism to the neo-liberal globalisation.<sup>27</sup> It is an operational body which has to outline the WSF’s strategy and enable an effective networking at the international level. In the framework of the IC, there are six thematic working groups to deal with the main questions—strategy, contents, methodology, finance, expansion, communication—. Every forum is structured in thematic areas, conceived as a catalyst of concerns that are already being pursued by social movements in order to give visibility to the main issues and foster their adoption by the global civil society. Every thematic area is organized in different spaces which serve to the groups participating in the forum to articulate their vision and their proposals. Every space has given functions and contemplates a different level of participation. There is a strict number of major frontal conferences, which roughly address the main issues, to socialize analyses and form the public opinion around specific themes. Each thematic area is then developed through some panel debates, intended to be ‘the map of WSF actions’ and its public face. Moreover, there are the testimonies: talks by leading personalities acting in a particular field, to valorise the already existing patrimony of experiences. In order to foster the spelling out of the civil society vision and proposals, representatives of UN organisations, political parties and governments are invited to take part in the controversy round tables on a

restricted number of ‘hot issues’. The most participative and dialogic spaces are the seminars, planned to ‘think collectively’ and elaborate diagnoses and strategies; and the workshops, led by the organizations participating in the forum, intended to be the ‘laboratory of the forum’ to promote the expansion of the networks and the sharing of experiences.

In this internal articulation, only little space was given to communication and media in the first two editions of the WSF —just some minor meetings were included within related themes areas as the identity of civil society and the nature of public spaces—. But communication is at the heart of social fora process. Firstly, it is a key resource in the process of reproduction of civil society. Secondly, social fora are communication spaces for those NGOs and movements involved, comprising both internal communication —they improve their networking— and external communication —social fora need to spread abroad their alternative vision of the world to reach the public opinion—. Some internal forces —especially CS Media and thematic NGOs— and some new global trends —the summit protests starting in 1998, misunderstood by mainstream media but widely covered by a crowd of new CS Media, and the massive multiplication of alternative media practices and movements on a global scale— led progressively to the inclusion of communication issues in the forum agenda. This growing consciousness culminated in the third WSF, in Porto Alegre January 2003, which can be considered a turning point in the fora history and one of the first international civil society meetings to reflect thoroughly on communication. In fact for the first time those civil society organisations involved in the fora process recognized the communication as a key resource for the development of an active and organized civil society: discussions around media and related issues, as intellectual property and cultural diversity, were given a special thematic area —‘media, culture and counter-hegemony’— which catalyzed a wide and enthusiastic participation, not only of alternative media activists but also of delegates from civil society organisations and simple participants. The trend was confirmed in the following edition of the WSF, in Mumbai, India, January 2004, in the thematic area ‘media, information, knowledge and culture,’ and also in the local experiences of social fora. For the forthcoming fifth edition of the WSF, planned to take place in January 2005 in Porto Alegre, a thematic forum around communication issues is being planned. A brief outline of the debate is presented in the next paragraph.

In the process of setting the CS agenda in many issues —an agenda based not on profit but on the human being and his rights, and addressed to a ‘globalization in solidarity’— there is a big question mark regarding the **strategies** to achieve the civil society aims outlined in the debates. The fora strategies are reduced, even if this is not seen as a deficiency, to the typical movements’ tactics: **campaigns at national and international level**<sup>28</sup> —in the case of communication, the WSF offered the background for the developing of the “Communication Rights in the Information Society” campaign (CRIS), which embodies many CS Media— and **demonstrations**. Social fora are not intended to speak directly to the traditional political institutions. But some argue there should be a sort of link between the social fora and the political sphere.<sup>29</sup> There are many ‘problems’ —but others would say ‘advantages’— directly linked to the peculiarity of the social forum as a new kind of public space. Firstly, there is a lack in the mechanisms that can ensure the communication between those actors: political parties and governmental bodies can not send delegates or propose activities but they can be simple observer or participate in a few controversy tables. The absence of a representative body does not allow social fora to be heard by the traditional decision-making bodies such as national governments, UN summits, transnational arenas as the WTO or the WEF. The fora refuse the mechanisms

of proxies typical of the democratic system, in an effort to create ‘another participation,’ but can not promote negotiations. Moreover, there is a problem of legitimation: most of the transnational arenas as the ITU, the WTO, the WIPO and the WEF are not recognized as legitimate interlocutors but regarded as undemocratic grey zones of power. Undeniably, there is also a general mistrust towards the traditional political sphere, especially by grassroots movements. The ‘problems’/‘advantages’ with the political sphere seem not to have solutions, being constitutive features of the identity of social fora as the clubby civil society arena. Other strategies have been proposed. Regarding the social agenda on communication, the civil society involvement in the multi-stakeholder processes as the World Summit in the Information Society (WSIS) is seen by most of CS organisations participating in the WSF as a way to negotiate the outcomes of the transnational summits and influence the ‘buttons rooms’.

## 2. An outline of the debate on communication at the WSF.

A major aim of the social fora is the development of a social agenda in the field of communication. The panels and the seminars at the last WSF two editions have outlined a set of recommendations about communication issues.<sup>30</sup> Despite those recommendations are very loose and not expressively directed to action, the WSF, as a space for the civil society to interlink and network, contributed to the emerging of a common vision in a issue —communication and media— which was not clearly in the civil society agenda yet. The current communication governance structure is analyzed following a double scheme. On the one hand, **the critical analysis of the existing establishment and the call for reforms**; on the other hand, **the development of proposals as concrete as possible for a different communication governance based on civil society needs**. CS Media play an important role especially in this second stage of the process. At the core of the civil society vision is the concept of **participation**: firstly, in the decision-making process, that must be more transparent, then in the communication itself, with more space for public domain and community media, and more respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. The main reference is the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), with a focus on the freedom of expression highlighted by Article 19. Another guiding document is the so-called People’s Communication Charter,<sup>31</sup> adopted in 1998 by a group of NGOs working on communication, which provides a framework for the development of a critical movement on communication and ICTs. The debate can be sorted in three areas: universal access and new communication rights, democratization of the communication system and creation of a new communication ‘from below.’ The distinction is just operative, whereas the official sub-themes of the communication thematic area are not functional to my classification.

**Universal access and new rights.** The right to communicate is seen as an outstanding human right, including and transcending Article 19 UDHR, and should be the new paradigm for a sustainable knowledge society. In this framework, it is necessary to define the concept of an inclusive Information Society, providing an universal and affordable access to technologies and telecommunication frequencies, which must to be considered common goods. ICTs are not neutral tools. Transferring Global North technology to the Global South is not a solution, because it creates a new dependence in technological matters with the risk of cultural dominance. The digital inclusion is possible only providing low cost connectivity and suitable education, and with the prevailing of the public service guided by the state over commercial interests. The Web requires a wide set of “Internet rights” to protect the users.

The adoption of free software and open source tools should be encouraged, as well as the implementation of the copyleft licence. IPRs should be redefined in the framework of the civil society call for a free circulation of knowledge and not according to the WTO guidelines. Cultural and linguistic diversity is strictly connected to the people's control over cultural resources and to the protection of cultural identities. Civil society should struggle against the homogenizing trend of the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)<sup>32</sup> and for economic and juridical measures —as the proposed charter of the linguistic diversity— to preserve the cultural patrimonies of people and nations, and ask the constitution of an ad-hoc international body in the framework of the UN. CS Media are not only seen as the main channels of expression for those excluded by the traditional ones —marginalized communities, women, youth, indigenous people— but also as lively examples of the implementation of most of these guidelines —the use of free software and copyleft licence and the respect for cultural and linguistic diversity above all.

**Democratization of communication.** Knowledge and information are recognized to be at the core of the neo-liberal economic model. The communication industry is facing a transnational process of mergers but ownership in the communication sector influence the media content. Media concentration is incompatible with democracy. Civil society should oppose the deregulation of the media sector, asking for appropriate legislative actions, and promote the public service. Citizens should establish a social control over the media<sup>33</sup> and ask for the social accountability of those who produce and sell information, as well as for media pluralism and independency from the economic and political powers: a sort of ecology of media, since the media sector is 'polluted.' CS Media are the citizens' responses to the undemocratic media concentration and represent the social re-appropriation of the media sector quasi-monopolized by a small number of big corporations. Social fora claims the creation of a transnational agency of social communication alternative to the mainstream media sector.

**A new communication 'from below'.** Participation is at the core of a new communication governance framework oriented to the need of people and CS Media are the best example. The participatory nature of CS Media is their most important feature. They are public spaces built from below which practice horizontal communication. They should be based on the mutual sharing of know-how and information and adopt the copyleft licence. ICTs offer participative tools for an interactive communication, but the traditional media, especially radio that does not require high resources and specific knowledge, remain the privileged channels for the large majority of the Global South. Moreover, an effective participation requires an appropriate education: CS media should promote suitable training programs to enable everyone to 'become the media'. CS Media are strategic to the development of civil society: social fora encourage the creation of autonomous and economically self-sufficient networks of CS Media. People should receive an adequate training to understand the media and start 'becoming the media'. The sustainability of CS Media should be guaranteed by a sort of Tobin Tax<sup>34</sup> on the media: the 1 percent of the advertising investments in the mainstream sector should be granted to the independent communication. Social fora ask for a transnational non-profit agency for fund-raising and the allocation of resources and services to the CS Media sector.

### 3. CS Media at the third WSF.

CS Media are directly involved in the organization and development of social fora representing one of the most active and far-sighted forces.<sup>35</sup> Their impact is not limited to **foster the inclusion of communication issues in the social fora agenda and contribute to form an alternative vision for communication governance**, but they are also **functional to the international networking of the fora process**, contributing to the enlargement of social fora. CS Media, participating since the beginning in the social fora process, drove the inclusion of the communication debate in the fora activities, proposing a myriad of workshops to disseminate their practices even before a dedicated thematic space has been given to communication issues. This is confirmed by Roberto Savio (Inter Press Service), the coordinator of the IC working group on communication. “It was not the initiative of the Forum itself, but **a request from the bottom** that led to the inclusion of communication issues in the forum agenda” —he said—.<sup>36</sup> But regarding the participation to the debate, a distinction should be made between radical activist media, such as Indymedia or Free Speech Tv and many local CS Media, and the major CS Media networks, as the World Association of Community Radio (AMARC), the World Association of Christian Communication (WACC), the Free Software Foundation, Oneworld, and Inter Press Service. Grassroots media are often marginalized, and they have difficulties in fitting in the fixed ‘structure’ of the fora, due to the magmatic and fluid composition of their networks. Whereas the panels are monopolized by the major NGOs, CS Media are far more active in seminars and workshops and privilege the non official events, as the ones planned at self-organized spaces or at the Youth Camp —the WSF camping area where young people meet and where self-organized workshops and grassroots movements’ strategic meetings take place—. One example of the grassroots media preference for the alternative spaces is *Rádio Muda*, a free radio based at the Campinas University, São Paulo. The radio has been covering the WSF Brazilian editions since 2001, broadcasting from the Youth Camp, and promoted many workshops, in collaboration with other radical media as the *Centro de Midia Independente*–Indymedia Brazil. And the aforesaid Indymedia, in the third WSF: the activists rented a building far from the forum sites, to overcome the media center restrictions and promote a vibrant sharing of know-how.

The other CS Media role, complementary to their involvement in the debate, is **reporting from the social fora and do it with a participatory approach**: while reporting, they **highlight tangible alternatives to the existing communication models and enable the participation in communication flows by everyone**. Therefore media centers, set up to facilitate the work of mainstream and alternative media,<sup>37</sup> have become crucial spaces where experiment alternative ‘ways to be media’, promoting an exciting dialogue between CS Media activists and a dynamic exchange of practical skills. Sharing and collaboration are the passwords at the media centers, and some interesting experiences were born in the frame of those spaces. That is the case of the *Ciranda* network, which provides the CS Media covering the fora with a virtual platform of collective publishing and, at the third WSF, of the experience of the World Social Television and Radio, a collective television and radio production broadcasted in the Porto Alegre community channels. A reference should be made to *Memória instantanea*, a platform that, from the WSF third edition, started collecting the participants’ video tapes to immediately edit them and produce collective documentaries to socialize ‘instantaneously’ the WSF life. These CS Media experiences contributed, even where they were not directly involved in the debates, to the definition of CS Media and to the recognition of their role.

But the debate led to little outcomes, until now. ‘The result was an huge denounce, while the problem is not denouncing anymore, but starting to create a strategy. The debate is too fragmented, and a real capacity of elaborate a strategy is lacking,’ Roberto Savio said. Until now social fora did not find the mechanisms to go beyond a critique of hegemonic structures. This is particularly true in a thematic area as unripe as the communication one: while CS media and the thematic NGOs are putting forward a series of recommendations, there is a certain difficulty to make a synthesis and translate the civil society wishes into a set of practical actions. Moreover, as for the others thematic areas, there are some tough obstacles to the collective elaboration of real alternatives: the large crowd of people attending the fora,<sup>38</sup> the fragmented panorama of the fora activities and the high number of events concentrated in a few days.<sup>39</sup> At the third WSF there were more than 55 seminars on communication issues, some hundreds of workshops, six panels and a big conference, creating a sort of ‘overbooked’ calendar of activities, with many similar events and only a little effort to create a convergence between groups. Thanks mainly to CS Media, the vision for a better communication governance coming out from the fora is becoming clearer but it is still pretty patchy in terms of strategies. The challenge for the future —and perhaps to the same survival of social fora as a space for creating alternatives— is the ability of social fora to become real spaces of elaboration.

### **THE PARTICIPATORY NATURE OF CS MEDIA: A CLASSIFICATION.**

This chapter seeks to go further in questioning the value of participation in the CS Media information production. After defining the concept of CS Media and after describing the context where they operate in order to evaluate then their performances, I will now outline a classification scheme that permits to estimate if and in which terms participation has become reality in the civil society information production. The aim is to understand if and how the proposals drafted at the WSF —and condensed in the slogan ‘another communication is possible’— have been translated into practice. I identified a set of features that CS Media ‘should’ embody, following the recommendations outlined at the WSF: above all the participatory nature and the pluralism. The analytical framework is structured in four steps, each of them analyzing more in depth one of those features. The first three —analysis of the organisation, the pluralism sphere, the participation sphere— analyse the organisation in its daily practices, considering the structural aspects in their influence in the information production. I will take into account the structural features of the organization, its attention to pluralism in terms of cultures, languages, geography and gender, and the actions promoting the involvement of the highest number of people, as for example specific programs of capacity-building. I argue that the form of organisation is not neutral and influences somehow its information production. The fourth dimension examines the information production. For each step, I will build up a table of evaluation. Every element of the table represents an index, that is a subjective interpretation based on my own observation, on interviews with key-persons of the organisations and on the analysis of the web sites. The gradation varies as follows: absent, weak, medium, strong, very strong.

Table 1. Outline of the analytical framework

<p><i>1. Analysis of the organisation</i></p> <p>Institutionalisation  Access to decision-making  Staff professionalisation  Virtualisation  Financial resources</p>
<p><i>2. The pluralism sphere</i></p> <p>Countries  Languages  Cultures  Gender</p>
<p><i>3. The participation sphere</i></p> <p>Sharing  Collaboration  Media diversity  Capacity-building</p>
<p><i>4. Information production</i></p> <p>Perspective  Languages  Media diversity  Participation</p>

The concept of CS Media provides a wide framework where many different experiences could be placed. I will underline the classification with some case studies of CS Media which operated at the third WSF,<sup>40</sup> because this event represented a turning point in the civil society effort to outline a vision for a more participatory communication. The selected case studies are the community radio international association AMARC, the grassroots network Indymedia and Ciranda, an experience originated within the WSF. For each case, I will now present a brief descriptive introduction on history and objectives.

**AMARC**, the World Association of Community Radio,<sup>41</sup> created in 1988 in Canada, is an international NGO coordinating the community radio movement. It has around 3.000 members in 106 countries. Its main aim is to contribute to the development of community radio at international level and advocate for its members, especially those based in the Global South. It has a democratic structure with representatives from every geographic region, and a thematic network of women and one of indigenous people. It promotes training projects to enable everyone to operate its own media. For the coverage of the WSF 2003 AMARC created the multimedia project *Infopossible*: a website, radio broadcasts by satellite, a web cast live, written features and reports in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

**Indymedia**,<sup>42</sup> or Independent Media Center (IMC), is a network of media working together with the aim of an independent information not mediated by the official sources. The first IMC was created in 1999 during the anti-WTO protests in Seattle. Several groups originated from that experience —and are more than 80 worldwide—. <sup>43</sup> The main activity is the publication of alternative information giving the readers the possibility to interact, thanks to an open-publishing platform via Web. The network is decentralized, composed by autonomous groups,

auto-financed and characterized by the formal absence of membership and leadership. In Porto Alegre, in addition to the website updating, Indymedia activists published the printed bulletin *CMI na rua* and participated in a radio streaming joint project with the independent Brazilian radio *Rádio Muda*.

**Ciranda Internacional de Informação Independente**<sup>44</sup> (International Independent Information Exchange) was created in 2001 in the framework of the WSF by some NGOs and media participating in the process, to provide those CS Media covering the WSF with an on-line platform where they could post and share their materials and pick up the others' stories to re-publish them, in the framework of a sharing of critical knowledge. Based on a voluntary collaboration by the activists involved in the social fora, it does not have any leader, but a core group of Brazilian journalists coordinating the website and a loose agenda to help to harmonize the coverage. Ciranda is no copyright and not for profit. The information is delivered in six languages, collecting material from hundreds of journalists from more than ten countries.

### 1. Analysis of the organization.

First I will analyse the degree of institutionalisation, resulting from the association between membership and leadership: centralised vs. decentralised organisation. Then, the access to the decision-making process, by investigating the ways to participate in the decision-making: a clear distinction is made between horizontal and vertical organisations. Thirdly, I will concentrate on the professionalization of the staff, and study the barriers of access due to the professionals skills required, when required. The virtualisation refers to the use of ICTs, in both internal —between member— and external —towards non-members— communication and interaction. Finally I consider the profit or not-for-profit character of the activities of the organisation. As all these organisations have a non-profit status, I will take into consideration their access to financial resources —sources, frequency, partners.

**AMARC** has a strong institutionalisation, with a fee for membership —even if it is proportional to the real possibilities of everyone to pay— and a democratic and representative but fixed structure of leadership. There is a general assembly taking place every three years and frequent consultation among members. The access to the decision-making process is medium, because it is not immediate, even if members can vote the decisions. The staff exists out of professionals and common people, most working on a voluntary base. AMARC makes a strong use of the ICTs, both in the internal and external communication. Internet is used as a tool to distribute information to people that can not be reached otherwise, and to exchange material between regions. The favourite channel however is radio, as not everybody has a computer but almost everybody has access to radio. AMARC uses the Internet to exchange information which is then always broadcasted. AMARC has a non-profit status: it is financed by members' fees and has good funding partners as the UNESCO and some private NGOs.

**Ciranda** has a weak degree of institutionalisation, because there are no leaders and access is open to everyone, after the subscription. The decision-making process is completely horizontal and open. The staff is composed especially by professional journalists, but professional skills are not required to participate. Ciranda is a web platform: the virtualisation degree is very strong. It is a non-profit project and the financial resources are good in terms of partners —between them the Brazilian national oil agency Petrobras, the German Foundation Henrich Böll, the news agency Inter Press Service— and continuity of the support granted.

**Indymedia** has no institutionalisation: everyone can publish on the website without asking permission or subscription. Access to decision-making is completely open, because the network is horizontal and it is carried on by a large crowd of volunteers participating more or less actively at the decision-making via mailing-list or open forum. No professional skills are required to participate. Formally there is not leadership. Indymedia is mainly a virtual organisation, based on its website; but every local and national IMC can carry on other activities, as printed bulletins or radio programs. The interactions between members are mediated via web. It is an auto-financed non-profit network, with very low access to institutional grants.

Table 2 – Analysis of the organization.

	AMARC	CIRANDA	INDYMEDIA
Institutionalisation	Very strong	Weak	Absent
Decision-making	Medium	Very strong	Very strong
Staff professionalization	Medium	Medium	Absent
Virtualisation	Strong	Very strong	Very strong
Financial resources	Very strong	Strong	Weak

## 2. The pluralism sphere.

In this part I will consider those categories known as ‘weak’ within the society and usually marginalised by mainstream media: the Global South, women, indigenous people, youth. CS media have a strong conviction in giving a voice to these categories. I will analyse the geographical embedding at local, national and international level, taking into account not only the number of the countries but also the distinction between North and South; the space given to different cultures (indigenous people and marginalised cultures); the linguistic diversity (space to minorities, idioms used) and the attention given to gender issues (specific actions to promote the equality, number of male/female people involved). The attention to those diversities promotes the respect of pluralism. The pluralism sphere can also be defined as the ‘representativeness’ sphere, identifying the representativeness in the capacity of representing and giving a voice to all sectors of society.

**AMARC.** Pluralism is at the core of the Milan Declaration on Communication and Human Rights,<sup>45</sup> which regulates the activities within the network. AMARC has a strong geographical distribution: based in Canada, it is present in 106 countries —mostly in South America and Africa, with Europe and North America following, while Asia is underrepresented—. The ‘official’ languages are English, French and Spanish, but any community radio uses its idiom or local dialect. The network, with a strong basis on the South of the world, has a special commitment with the indigenous people and the marginalized cultures. To deal with gender issues a Women’s International Network has been established; the program Fem-Access promotes the activity of women in the community radio field.

**Ciranda** has a medium geographical distribution: journalists come mostly from Latin America and Europe; Africa and Asia are underrepresented, as well as their cultures. Ciranda produces stories in six idioms. No special attention is given to gender issues, but the presence of male and female journalists is balanced.

**Indymedia** has a strong geographical distribution, even if the IMCs are mainly based in the industrialized world, where the use of ICTs and connection to the Internet is easier because of financial resources, better infrastructures and education. The language diversity is well represented: every IMC is using its own language, even if English is massively preponderant. The cultural matrix is the Western countries environment. There is no real commitment with gender issues within the network, beyond a formal reference to ‘gender equality’ in the Principles of Unit,<sup>46</sup> the IMC guiding ‘rules’, and the discussion list IMC-women. In the reality, women are underrepresented in the network.

Table 3 – The representativeness/pluralism sphere.

	AMARC	CIRANDA	INDYMEDIA
Geographical distribution	Very strong	Medium	Very strong
Languages	Very strong	Strong	Strong
Cultures	Very strong	Medium	Weak
Gender	Very strong	Medium	Weak

### 3. The participation sphere.

I will now consider people as active protagonists and not passive users of the information: it means that participation should be enabled by a set of actions. **Participation** is here seen **as the product of specific strategies that promote it**: the use of a wide range of different channels (radio, ICTs, television...), with special attention to those media with low barriers of access and not requiring specific knowledge or alphabetization; the ways to share the information (copyright vs. copyleft, free access vs. payment), the possibilities of interaction of people with the media (filters vs. free posting, open-publishing vs. close-publishing), specific training programs as the basis for an effective participation (providing education to tools is necessary to allow everyone to operate his own media). The participation sphere can be also considered the degree of ‘openness’ of the organization.

**AMARC** focuses on the radio, characterized by an affordable cost and only low education required. The organization promotes as one of its main aims specific training programs to develop the skills of non-professionals to operate their own media. AMARC makes also a wide use of ICTs, but always in combination with more available media as radio. The content is no copyright, and no payment is required to access it. Collaboration is encouraged, as in the tradition of community media.

**Ciranda** has a strong commitment with sharing and collaboration, which is central to the idea of providing people a platform to exchange materials in opposition to the commercial media model. Ciranda is a platform where everyone, when subscribed, can post his feature or analysis, and can take others’ material to re-publish it allowing a wide circulation of critical information. There is little intermediation of an (open) editorial collective. The media diversity is weak: Ciranda is based and remains in the web. Specific training sessions are organized at every event covered by Ciranda, to enable an effective networking between the people involved in the project—the ‘*Cirandeiros*’.

**Indymedia** is based on sharing of knowledge and information. The materials published on its website are no copyright and protected by the Creative Commons licence: circulation is

encouraged. The possibilities of collaboration with the network are very high because there is no intermediation —except from the editorial team that is open to everyone and controls if the material published fits in a set of common principles that respect for diversity of gender and race; if the ‘post’ is not respectful, it will be hidden, not cancelled but obscured. Indymedia is a virtual community based on the Web, but promotes the circulation of its information through other different channels, as the radio and the prints— a printed bulletin to circulate the features posted in the website. Indymedia promotes training seminars and workshops, in order to teach people to post their information on the website, to promote the use of free software and more generally to ‘become the media’.

Table 4. The participation sphere.

	AMARC	CIRANDA	INDYMEDIA
Sharing	Very strong	Very strong	Very strong
Collaboration	Strong	Strong	Very strong
Media diversity	Strong	Weak	Strong
Capacity-building	Very strong	Strong	Strong

#### 4. The information production: the coverage project of WSF 2003.

The fourth part regards information production, by looking at the coverage project of the third WSF. It is mainly a descriptive analysis, which summarizes the characteristics of the information production of the CS Media mentioned above.

AMARC<sup>47</sup> created the project *Infoposible*: a platform with many tools to communicate the WSF worldwide. First, a website where journalists from four continents published their stories in four languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese and French. Then the radio programs, broadcasted via satellite to more than 2.000 radio stations in Latin America and 35 stations in South Africa and a worldwide via Internet radio in partnership with FIRE, the Feminist Internet Radio Endeavour based in Costa Rica. Written features and sound file reports were distributed daily via email lists, as well as posted to AMARC website. The perspectives adopted is basically the community point of view, then the Global South and the female ones. The participation in case of the multimedia initiative *Infoposible* at the WSF is medium, because the coverage is done mainly by professional journalists, working together with community radio activists.

In 2003 edition of **Ciranda**, the core group made an effort to coordinate the journalists participating in the coverage: some meetings before and during the WSF were organized to promote a more organized and interesting exchange. Daily meetings gathered the Brazilian core group with other journalists, promoting a vibrant debate on the WSF coverage. Despite being based in Porto Alegre and representing a Brazilian idea, the perspective is a mix between the North and the South. The media diversity is weak: Ciranda does not exist without the web.

In January 2003 in Porto Alegre **Indymedia** used a wide range of channels to distribute its information and reach the highest number of people: beyond updating the website, which is its main ‘public face’, the group in Porto Alegre, formed by around 50 people from all over the world, published a daily newsletter pasted on the walls to reach even those not connected to the Internet. Indymedia put on air via web streaming *Rádio Muda*, the local radio from the São Paulo region, which was broadcasting from the Youth Camp. The participation was very strong:

the radio was based in the middle of the camping area, with microphones open to everyone; the website and the prints were developed in the Indymedia space, a house rented for this purpose near the WSF site.

Table 5. The information production.

	AMARC	CIRANDA	INDYMEDIA
Project	Infoposible	Ciranda 2003	<i>CMI na rua</i> ; website; radio streaming
Perspective	South, community, gender	North/South	North
Languages	Strong	Very strong	Strong
Media diversity	Very strong	Weak	Very strong
Participation	Medium	Strong	Very strong

### 5. Is another communication already there?

CS Media have outlined a new model of communication putting into practice the slogan ‘another communication is possible’. I will now make a critical synthesis of the outcomes, taking into consideration also my other case studies not mentioned in this paper.<sup>48</sup>

There is a **close relationship between the CS media structure and organisation principles and their information production**. In particular I refer to the institutionalisation degree, the membership rules and the internal dynamics. When the institutionalisation diminishes—that is when there is a loose membership and an horizontal structure—the participation seems to grow. The numeric and geographical diffusion does not grant an effective multiculturalism. Most of the experiences were originated in the North of the world: they have many difficulties in fitting in different frameworks and in interpreting the needs and models of different cultures. Often **the cultural matrix is the industrialized world cultural frame**, due to the fact that the North has more access to the resources in terms of money, tools and education. There is a general trend in respecting and fostering the linguistic diversity. The main languages of international communication remain English, French and Spanish. CS Media confirm to be one of the few media where marginalized communities and groups can find a space to express themselves. Except for the community radios in AMARC, **gender issues are still underrepresented** in CS Media: even if the issues are on the their agenda, real life is different, with just a few women involved in the projects. The dimension of collective **memory** is becoming more important in the CS Media production: as the mainstream media are concentrated on contingent events, CS Media also pay attention to the processes affecting people and nations, criticizing and contributing to form an active citizenship. **Participation** is seen as a characteristic that can not be given up. In order to favour it, organizations have set up specific training programs: **capacity-building** is seen as the main strategy to foster the participation by everyone. Training programs promoting sharing of knowledge and know-how are recognized to be a fundamental requisite especially by those organisations working with the Global South: without a suitable education, provide access to tools does not make sense. Most CS Media have adopted a **copyleft licence**, to promote the sharing of practical knowledge and contents. They reject the commer-

cial model when they foster the widest circulation of their critical information. Usually they are no copyright and practice a wide exchange of material with other CS Media. Very often they are **connected each other through transnational networks** to facilitate the exchanges and advocate for their needs. This dimension of collaboration is crucial to the survival of CS Media, because they do not have many resources and can survive only sharing what they have. Almost all CS Media have a **non-profit status**, and have to do a lot of effort for fund-raising. They receive money from international NGOs or foundations, but usually only for limited projects. Fortunately they are widely based on **voluntary work** and on a large crowd of people spending their time and money to sustain the activities. CS Media often use also **free software**, and when there is not yet a specific technical skill, there is a growing interest in the topic. **ICTs are strategic tools** in the development of new forms of communication. They permit to shorten the distance and reach people far from where things happen. They are crucial instruments in empowering an effective participation: the possibilities of ‘becoming the media’ grew massively with the ICTs. But they must be combined with other more available means, such as radio or printed newsletters, to reach those people who do not have access to Internet or have problems of illiteracy.

I argue that CS media highlight a new model of communication, even if it is only roughly defined and not yet coherent enough. At the core of this model there is civil society and not the mere economical profit. This model has four main features:

- **Open access** in the information production by everyone in an horizontal context: it can be seen as the other meaning of participation. An open equalitarian structure encourages a real participation as well as specific training programs can foster an effective involvement even of non-professionals. When the participation of citizens in the information production is not possible, such as in news agencies operating with strict journalistic codes, social control mechanisms should be established in order to assure more transparency in the information production and promote the social accountability of professional journalists.
- **Not-for-profit status** and if possible **financial independence** as guarantees of the media independency from economical and political powers, and against media concentration. Information should be considered a common good and a service to citizens necessary to form a conscious civil society actively participating in the political and social life. This can only be true when the media are not ‘serving’ anyone.
- **Respect for linguistic, cultural, gender diversities.** Media should represent and give voice to the different communities and identities. Women, marginal cultures and all idioms should access and have their space in the information production, as well in the entertainment sphere.
- **The net as organisation form.** The network permits to share materials and know-how, and to overcome the problem of limited financial and human resources. The net’s main features—decentralisation, autonomy of the nodes, connectivity—facilitate the participation. In a framework where information is seen as common good, sharing materials, knowledge and skills become the most exciting and the easiest way to create communication.

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## NOTAS.

1. This section has been elaborated more closely in a paper on "Civil Society Media and visions for communication governance: the cases of the World Social Forum and the World Summit on the Information Society", a joint project with Arne Hintz from the University of Hamburg. The paper has been presented at the International Association for Media and Communication Research annual conference in Porto Alegre, Brazil, July 2004.
2. But Gramsci's further elaboration on the concept was contradictory, being based on the communist theoretical vision. See the "Prison Notebooks", 1971. In the United Nations context, the term "civil society" includes also the business world. See [http://www.un.org/partners/civil\\_society/home.htm](http://www.un.org/partners/civil_society/home.htm)
3. Kaldor, 2003.
4. Kaldor, 2003 and Pianta, 2001.
5. Anheier/Glasius/Kaldor, 2001.
6. Ibidem.
7. Zolo, 1995.
8. Brecher/Costello/Smith, 2000.
9. Falk, 1993/1997/2000 and Brecher, Costello, Smith, 2000.
10. The global civil society represents the "social dimension of the globalisation". Leonardi 2001
11. Anheier/Glasius/Kaldor 2001
12. New social movements are those socio-cultural movements starter in the 60s and 70s and questioned the values of contemporary societies. They include feminist movements, environmentalists, groups

- advocating for human rights and for the respect of sexual orientation etcetera. They oppose their new discourse and values to the premises of Western civilization. Melucci, 1982.
13. Melucci, 1982.
  14. The transnational advocacy networks are network of activists “bounded together by shared values, a common discourse and dense exchanges of information and services (...) at the core of the relationship is information exchange (...), they must use the power of their information, ideas, and strategies to alter the information and value contexts within which states make policies.” Keck and Sicking 1998, pg. 2; 16. Keck and Sicking, 1998.
  15. Castells, 2001.
  16. The rise of a global civil society is directly linked to four evolutions: the globalisation process, the homogenisation of culture, the spread of democracy and the development of the Internet. Van Audenhove, Cammaerts, Frissen, Engels and Ponsioen, 2003.
  17. Bennet, 2003.
  18. Castells, 1996 and 2001.
  19. At the beginning of the third millennium, in Africa the estimated Internet users represent the 0,76 percent of the total population; in Canada and the US they are the 41,05 percent. Source: Nua Internet Service.
  20. This concept has been developed and elaborated more deeply by Arne Hintz from the Research Centre Media & Politics of the University of Hamburg in this research on the alternative media at the World Summit on the Information Society.
  21. While commercial media are core members of the business sector, the role of public service media is not so obvious. However we would argue that their organisational structures, their journalist principles, and particularly their fundamental links with the objectives of the nation state put them firmly outside the realm of CS Media.
  22. Pianta, 2001.
  23. Neveu, 2000. He does not make any reference to the experience of Social Fora, which was not started yet.
  24. Cassen, in Jampaglia/Bendinelli 2002.
  25. Santos, 2003.
  26. The Chart of Principles have been written in São Paulo, Brazil, in April 2001, after the first edition of the WSF, by the Brazilian organizing committee, and adopted in June 2001 by the WSF International Council. It has been partly changed in Bhopal, India, in April 2003, by the Indian organizing committee, to temporary adapt it to the Indian contest. For the full text see: [http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id\\_menu=4&cd\\_language=2](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id_menu=4&cd_language=2).
  27. Composition of the IC: [http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id\\_menu=3\\_2\\_1&cd\\_language=2](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id_menu=3_2_1&cd_language=2).
  28. Again, the fora do not promote directly actions or campaigns, but stimulate the adoption of statements and actions by movements and organizations.
  29. Some observed even the complete non-attendance of the politicians in the experience of social fora. Della Porta/Mosca, 2003. However specific thematic fora have been created to involve in the process those politicians sensitive to the WSF themes. The Forum of Parliamentarians and the Forum of Local Authorities are contributing to the communication between the fora and the formal political structures.
  30. For an overview of the proposals on communication governance at the WSF 2003, see: [http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.asp?pagina=paineis\\_eixo3\\_ing](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.asp?pagina=paineis_eixo3_ing).
  31. See: <http://www.pccharter.net>.
  32. See: [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/serv\\_e/serv\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/serv_e/serv_e.htm).

33. Media Watch Global, an observatory over the mainstream media, originated from the social for a experience. Launched in 2003 within the third WSF, it is promoted by *le monde diplomatique* and Inter Press Service.
34. The Tobin Tax —from the name of James Tobin, a Ph. D. Nobel-laureate economist at Yale University who elaborate the concept— is a tax on cross-border currency transactions. The revenue should go to environmental and human needs. Its adoption has been fostered by the social for a from the beginning.
35. CS media are represented in the organization and leader bodies of the WSF. Several CS media as Oneworld, Znet, Inter Press and AMARC are members of the IC, as well as a series of major ONGs focused on communication issues, as the *Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica* (ALER), the *Agencia latinoamericana de Información* (ALAI) and the Association for Progressive Communication (APC).
36. In an interview about the advance of the communication debate within the WSF.
37. The fora are covered mostly by CS Media, with a growing participation of mainstream media in the last editions. The 80 percent of the media covering the third WSF were CS media, according to the responsible of the WSF press office Verena Glass.
38. Around 100.000 people at the third WSF, more than 70.000 at the forth edition.
39. Around 1.300 self-managed activities and 72 main events in 2003; 1.200 seminars and 35 major conferences in 2004.
40. The case studies are taken from my more extensive research project on CS Media at the WSF.
41. *Association Mondiale des radiodiffuseurs communitaires*; [www.amarc.org](http://www.amarc.org).
42. See: [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org).
43. Data, 2003.
44. See: [www.ciranda.net](http://www.ciranda.net); the Brazilian core group of the initiative is now working on a project called *Planeta Porto Alegre*, a website and a weekly newsletter on the issues of the social for a.
45. See: <http://www.amarc.org/amarc7/papers/dec-en.doc>.
46. See: <http://docs.indymedia.org/view/Global/PrinciplesOfUnity>.
47. In collaboration with other networks: ALAI, ALER, WACC among others.
48. The global news agency Inter Press Service, the transnational network OneWorld, the Brazilian local radio Rádio Muda and the international NGOs ATTAC.

