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# **Electronic Governance of the Civil Society is the key to help it face a changing Society**

With the example of the World Conservation Union (IUCN)

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## **Abstract**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Networks, eCommerce, eGovernment and Internet based virtual communities, all together interlinked in turmoil of change, deeply transformed the World and our societies. Moving from eGovernment to eGovernance, States partially horizontalize their structures that promise to give the Citizens a more participative power in public decisions.

The relay of Civil Society traditionally makes governments and politicians to communicate better with the citizens. However, because of the move to eGovernance, the need for this relays decreases. On one hand in effect, State is becoming more and more directly accountable to the citizens, notably thanks to better ICT based communication channels. On the other hand, State is also becoming more and more efficient in gathering directly accurate and real time data on the citizens, thus becoming able to exert better control.

The opposite is not true and this will lead eventually to citizens losing more and more control over their own lives. This converging tendency will affect the whole Civil Society that traditionally offered and controlled these relays; not only political parties and special interest

groups but to a much wider extend Non Governmental Organisations. In this thesis, I foresee an increased and irrepressible need for a better e-Governance of NGOs as their need to face this challenge will finally grow.

With an engineering background, I propose, in a personal global journey, to analyze this situation in the light of social sciences. To check my assumptions, I examine, in this context, the case of one of the major international NGO, the World Conservation Union (IUCN). As an example of means to reinforce its status in the present e-World, I proposed to the IUCN to take benefit of new forms of Internet based horizontal organisations to enhance the access and the visibility of its Red List of Threatened Species.

Upon the failure of this proposition, I then examined the different web sites of IUCN, in the light of social communication theories in order to compare its present situation with my vision of an ideal situation into which this NGO would be in a better position to answer the challenges exposed in the introduction.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

## 1.1 The e-prefix

There are still pockets of resistance, but eventually all will agree that the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have engaged the Society, wherever it is located, in a new 'ICT Revolution'. This dramatic change comes along with the globalisation of the world economies that in turn, in a powerful virtuous circle, motivates further developments of the ICTs. Banks, commerce and insurance companies paved the way, manufacturing industries and eventually the rest of the private sector followed the path. The ICT Revolution equally touched more and more homes thus further enhancing ICTs capabilities and decreasing the costs involved. Governments do not lag behind. Only a few countries have not yet, even partially, digitized their administration at different, local, regional or national levels of government, a move called "e-Government" by specialists, by reference to the well-known e-Commerce<sup>1</sup>. Some of the countries that have achieved a certain level of e-Government further engaged in adapting and transforming the State's governance or, in other terms, in changing and adapting the way they choose to carry out 'better relations between the governments and the citizens', expectedly according to their citizens' needs and expectations. We know this move, which goes far beyond e-Government, as e-Governance. Of course, it concerns equally the governance of ICTs as in effect e-Governance, like e-Commerce, relies on the fact that individuals dispose of personal computers and Internet access to take full benefit of e-Governance promises. Finally, some other countries consider that, in order to support national e-Government, they had to prop up either national ICT industry or national telecommunication infrastructure development. This tendency often paradoxically links to the end of the telecommunication monopoly, a move that tends to release the grip of State on one of its most powerful instrument of power, as we shall see while discussing about communication in chapter 2. See for example what Mr Zhu Hongren, member of the ICT commission and Deputy Vice-director, Advisory Committee for the State Informatization of China has to say<sup>2</sup>:

*Why ICT is so important for government?*

- *It is mainly because the government is the largest owner and the possessor of information, and this in any country, be it either a developed or a developing country.*
- *In addition, the second reason, it is because the government is the largest user of information technologies in any country.*

*So, if we use ICT to improve the government, at least we have to reach four objectives:*

- *First: effectiveness, efficiency and productivity. In most of the time, it is the most important.*
- *Second: transparency, accountability and competitiveness*
- *Third: Citizen centred government*

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<sup>1</sup> "e" stands for electronically supported

<sup>2</sup> EPFL eGov lecture in Beijing University, 26.01.2007

- *Four: Build a new partnership among government, citizens and enterprises*

*Why eGovernment is so popular in this world?*

*Because, as students, workers and entrepreneurs use technology to facilitate their daily life, they start to demand the same from governments. This leads to the development of a different form of government, moving away from the managerial hierarchical to service oriented and citizen centred government.*

As we have just seen, e-Governance is not only about ICT, it is not just the responsibility of engineers and ICT specialists, it is not simply about computers and telecommunication, it is much more than that. The whole society is concerned; which means in particular the individual citizens themselves.

## 1.2 The e-Civil Society incentive

ICTs and Internet in Government and in the private sector push to a reinforced control on citizens by all possible means. This happens essentially by the collection and compilation of information that allows a more and more tight control of Communication under all its aspects. It is also worth noting that this control expands on the whole planet, though at different rhythm and pace, but with a similar end.

ICTs and the Networks – a term more generic than Internet – that gave so much additional power to these sectors, contribute as well in reinforcing and fixing their power. Despite their declarations on accountability and transparency, State and the private sector will not change to open themselves voluntarily towards a larger sharing of power and more ‘horizontality’. Their organisational structures are extremely vertical. They are structures of power. Citizens, despite their feeling that networks, thanks to myths like the Information Society and the

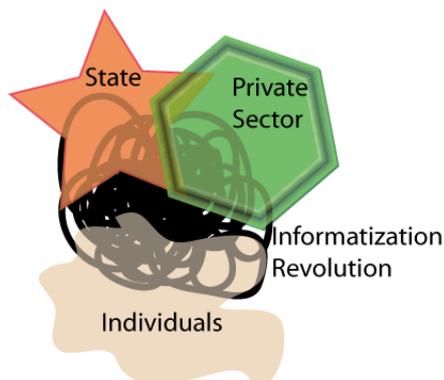


Figure 1- Game of power

Knowledge Society, give them more power and reinforce their individuality, in reality turn themselves more and more to the public sector to solve their problems and eliminate their frustrations. The networking of centres of power (public and private) and of citizens/ customers, which appears to justify the e-Governance plans, lacks of coordination, organisation, information and communication. In the new game of power born out of the ICT Revolution, one of the players stays at the side of the road. It is the community of unorganized individuals.

Services, rendered to individuals by State and the Private Sector, are of course essential. One should question however, whether the delivery of these services is effective and efficient, as in effect State is sometimes the least efficient mode of organisation to solve a significant number of the problems our modern Society has to face nowadays. We are not surprised therefore, to see alternative forms of organisations emerging from the ‘Civil Society’ intending to compensate the deficiencies or to fill the voids created by some of the malfunctioning of State. The ‘Civil Society’ in this sense developed in history out of the classical social groups to face and resolve problems not yet addressed, thanks to the activity of groups specifically created to address these issues.

In a world of ‘ICT Revolution’, where commerce became eCommerce, in a world where government became eGovernment, in a world where Internet creates new channels for more efficient communication, the Civil Society mostly remains absent. In a world where governments, by implementing eGovernance, tend to interact more closely with their citizens and residents, what will attract people to support further those existing NGOs that helped people to get these results from their governments? In a world where, thanks to the ‘*Pervasive Computing*’, the resulting ‘*Ubiquitous Society*’<sup>3</sup> will isolate individuals in a cocoon of easy interconnectivity but increased surveillance, will people still keep a critical eye on what happens to them?

In order to restore the balance of power between those three major sectors of Society, individuals should benefit essentially and collectively from structures – different from those of the State or the Private Sector – that will allow them to discuss and reflect together in order to communicate better their real will to the two other stakeholders. I refer of course to an exposure of will that should develop thanks to the citizens’ own independent networks, and though these will eventually use the very same ICTs and Networks that the public and private sectors use.

Are the civil structures of Civil Society, which formed in the (recent) past, still capable of answering to that need of independent communication? If not, there are serious indications that, from a technological point of view, CTI and the Network should form the foundation on which to build the new e-Civil Society needed to restore the balance of the game.

### 1.3 Brief introduction to Methodology

We shall first explore the Civil Society by notably defining it along with one of its subset, the NGO.

Second, we shall try to examine the particular context of the complex inter-relations between public and civil sector, particularly those occurring during the ICT Revolution with a careful study of the two axes introduced above: Communication and the Civil Society itself. We shall be busy with the environment of e-Civil Society, in other terms ‘ICT enabled organisations of the civil society’. We shall interpret concepts like ‘Information Society’, ‘Knowledge Society’, and localize and define interfaces of e-Civil Society on one side with e-Governments and eGovernance on the other side with new social structures.

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<sup>3</sup> The “Ubiquitous Society” benefits from “Pervasive Computing” to change the way networks interact with the end users, the individual. Till today, in the Pre-Ubiquitous age, the act of connecting to the network is based on the free will of the user. In effect, the network – Internet – is available and remains still and quiet until one decides to actively connect to obtain certain services. It is true and largely discussed that the act of connecting expose the user to passive unwanted connections with sometimes harmful effects - like viruses, identity thefts, privacy violations – but the risk is exposed and a responsible and well informed user of networks should be aware of that. Sometimes it has positive aspects in the sense of networks pushing desirable information on the screen or software update to the computer while the user is busy with his initial request. In the present internet age, the network waits for the user to connect. The user is not connected; it is rather his home, his office or a portable device that offer connectivity and potential access. The Ubiquitous Society intends to reverse the act of connection. In fact in the perfect sense of Ubiquitous Society, thanks to pervasive computing, the user is no longer a user in the traditional sense as he is permanently and purely passively connected to the network. He has become an e-Citizen. As long as the State controls that network, with good and accepted e-Governance, it may have beneficial results.

Third, we shall try to disclose the fields of reflections, in particular on organisations, an NGO should handle as it wishes to make the move to change to e-Civil Society. In effect, and I mentioned it earlier, I think that horizontal organisations have a role to play in defining e-governance of the civil society or e-NGO. However, of course, talking about horizontal organisations should stimulate us to check social theories like Anarchism, Libertarianism, Liberalism and, very important, the good governance of Commons.

Fourth, I propose, in order to make the subject more readable, to examine the case of a particular NGO, the IUCN<sup>4</sup>. This NGO (?) has been in existence for a long time, encompass the Globe and its mission is extremely important for the future of our environment. It shows by some aspects that it is a serious user on Internet based communication, but we shall see that it falls short on some more recent aspects of the development of horizontal forms of the web.

Finally, we shall examine, for a hypothetical NGO, what could be the reasonable objectives to develop for an appropriate ICT-based response to the changes we foresee in governments, State, the private sector and the Society. The practical conclusion will be a model of a list of duty for the ICT and Communication Manager of this NGO willing to become e-NGO in the context of fulfilment needed to achieve a sensible and effective e-Civil Society.

## 1.4 Last but not least

In approaching this vast subject, one will doubtlessly feel overwhelmed by the task of analysing each and every aspect of the e-Civil Society under the light of good electronic governance. Among the subjects of great importance, let us mention ICT technical aspects, the economy, management and risk management and legal aspects of projects in an international environment and last but not least, human resource management of eGovernance projects.

I decided however to leave aside these topics mainly for practical reasons but also because either answers are already available in existing papers or to allow further study in the correlating aspects we shall provide in the present master thesis.

There are other reasons too. ICT specialists are the first persons that an NGO wishing to go e-NGO will most likely consider to hiring. Our goal with this paper is to present this NGO with an alternative to consider and matter to reflect on as the need to hire a new media communication manager eventually arises.

## 1.5 The 'fall of the Civil Society'

I introduced my subject with the idea that e-Governance will empower the State at the expense of the individuals. Indeed, e-Governance could bring 'successes' to a government that might well in return provoke vital concerns in the Civil Society or the NGO. Let us presume, to be on the safe side, that the threat is real. In order to face it, the NGOs will have no other choice than to follow the trend initiated by the private sector and governments and to adapt themselves to the ICT Revolution. However, my observations have shown me that many of these organisations, especially the "non-professional" ones, are not ready at all. In addition, what does 'adaptation' means to them? Is it imitation of the private or even the public sector? Is it that they will have eventually to start their own 'e-Governance' projects but taking the risk of having to do it in a rush, in a defensive or disorientated position? Should, yes or

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<sup>4</sup> See paragraph 2.4 for details on the IUCN

no, the NGOs participate in the debate and pressure exerted by citizens for a better e-governance in their country and strengthen back the pressure on them? By answering to these questions, an NGO could reflect early and proactively about the development of its own e-Governance, rather than waiting longer for fear of wrongdoing. However, this supposes of course a minimum degree of readiness from the part of the NGOs. I will contribute to this reflection by presenting here some of the foreseeable effects of e-Governance of State on the population and some of the motivations and characteristics of social behaviour that underpins the development of e-Governance.

Finally pre-‘ICT Revolution’ time was characterized by forms of organisation that were dependent of slow and poorly efficient communication between agents or between principals and agents. These were static organisations built around vertical structures. However, what the ICT Revolution has taught us was that ICTs dramatically changed communication and information processing and that this cannot be without effects on organisations.

As governments and politicians are progressively pressed to become more accountable and use ICTs and networks to communicate better, the need for external relays between citizens and governmental decider decreases and one must admit that the Civil Society has a bad press with most governments because of their challenging attitude. On another hand, some government but also some NGOs realized that many tasks and services that were produced by civil servants could be handed over to organisations of the Civil Society<sup>5</sup>, usually non-profit organisations, with multiple benefits. People working on a voluntary basis or as employees for such organisations are in effect less prone to challenge the government; they are more flexible and they have to be more accountable of their actions than the governmental agents are. However, I really wonder why, as they benefit from mandates from the government, these organisations should remain longer non-for-profit organisations.

*The non-profit sector has grown dramatically in recent decades. It is bigger, more politically powerful, and more sophisticated than ever. Between 1977 and 1997, the number of new non-profits averaged 23,000 a year—a growth rate much higher than that of private companies over the same period. (This growth accelerated in recent years. It increased from an average of 15,000 a year between 1977 and 1987 to more than 27,000 a year between 1987 and 1997.) One of every fifteen service jobs is found in the non-profit sector.*

*Non-profit revenue growth has also outpaced that of the private sector, rising 140 percent between 1977 and 1997 (after adjusting for inflation). This figure is nearly double the 81 percent growth rate of the U.S. economy over the same time period. Non-profit revenue growth was especially robust in the arts, culture, social service, and health care fields. In each, the growth rate was at least double that of the broader economy.*

*As the non-profit sector has grown, its funding from government sources has skyrocketed, rising 595 percent in real terms between 1977 and 1997. The percentage of non-profit revenue received from government also rose from 27 percent of total non-profit revenues to 33 percent between 1977 and 1997. (When religious congregations are excluded from the definition of non-profits, the government contributions to non-profit revenues total 37 percent.) Again, the major beneficiaries of this increase were health, social service, and arts organizations, each of which saw its government support rise by 200 percent or more after adjusting for inflation.*

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<sup>5</sup> See for example Goldsmith and Egers; 2004; “Governing by Networks, the new shape of public sector”; The Brookings Institution

*The rise of the non-profit sector means that governments now deliver less than half the social services that they finance. In most communities, three fifths or more of health and social services are now delivered by either non-profit or for-profit providers. The result is an increasingly symbiotic relationship. Government is the largest founder of non-profit organizations, which, in turn, deliver many health and social services to the poor, aged, and disabled on behalf of the state.*<sup>6</sup>

## 1.6 Resources to e-transformation

ICT transformed the business and the government and they both learned how to manage this change notably by developing appropriate competencies. Will Civil Society organisation be able to follow this trend and keep the pace of change? In other terms, will it have enough competencies and resources? As we all know, the private sector makes an abundant use of ICT. It can afford it because the capacity of ICTs to enhance productivity enables acceptable returns on investments. Most governments also make a very important use of ICT and are ready to allocate resources. Those who are not yet sufficiently developed have a strong will to do so.<sup>7</sup> Despite the cost and the difficulty of prioritizing governmental tasks, it is our belief that most governments usually find eventually acceptable financial solutions. Governments are aware of the need to better their national 'human capital' with increased capacities in using and developing ICTs that eventually the private sector needs. Once again, NGOs are in a much more difficult position. Except the wealthy ones, they seldom have enough resources to spend on ICT and find it difficult to explain to donors that they spend a sizable part of donations not to achieve their purpose but to enhance their productivity and adapt their governance to modern expectations.

We have thus to discover whether the NGOs really have to join the ICT Revolution and how. What are the risks and benefits they could encounter while making this change, but also what are the challenges and opportunities. In addition, in terms of opportunities, a time of change is also a time of reflections and reconsideration of the old ways of organizing activities and relations. ICTs provide an unprecedented ease of access to information and unheard means of communication between people. This opportunity could deeply transform relationships between people themselves and within organisations, from traditional vertical modes to more horizontal ones. As NGOs are constrained to adapt to this new paradigm or take the risk to disappear, I shall try here to open new paths of reflection based on flexible horizontal networks, managed in the spirit of participation of each stakeholder under the regime of federalism, this in order to make the best possible use of external – horizontal – resources.

## 1.7 Top-down vs. bottom-up

### 1.7.1 Is man really at the centre of the reflection?

It is not a surprise that, when you come to reading literature, listening to lectures, participating in presentations in e-Governance studies, the main study topic generally addresses the

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<sup>6</sup> Goldsmith and Egers (2004)

<sup>7</sup> See for example the INSEAD/WEF 2005-2006 Report: *The Global information technology report - Leveraging ICT for development* ; Table 6.03 Importance of ICT to government vision's of the future

subject from high above. The government's perspective<sup>8</sup> dominates, with a global point of view, dealing with paradigms, systems, findings of social sciences, IT infrastructures and architecture and so on, in a typical top-down approach. This contradicts of course parallel declarations that the best approach to achieve results in e-Governance is the bottom-up approach.

In effect, one seldom places Man – the individual, the user, the citizen, the beneficiary – in the centre of perspective, to the exception perhaps of discussions on participative democracy. However, Man is clearly one of the principal agents of organisations, though they tend to survive their agents. We shall discuss this later, but to illustrate this point, let us have this quick look.

Explanations usually endeavour to take their subject not only from above, dealing with structures, functions, processes, but also consider organisations as static entities. From this point of view, organisations are independent entities, with their own existence, *raison-d'être*, characteristics, functioning, inputs, outputs, efficiency, etc. It is much uncommon to find studies on organisations that take their subject from underneath, from the bottom-up, in other terms that take as starting point the human agent, despite the fact that eventually this human agent forms one of the essential parts of any organisation. Let us take e-Governments' projects as another example: their concern is a better use of ICTs, both technically and organisationally. They are also concerned by automating processes and enhancing infrastructures in order to reduce the digital divide. The most elaborate even consider educating people, both civil servants and citizens, to use ICTs. People are involved, yes, but again, only as agents or targets of administrative processes, never as responsible and free individuals and never as initiating agents. This is precisely the reason of the strength of verticality in organisations and this is where the civil society pops up on stage.

## 1.7.2 Top-down or bottom-up approach of the Civil Society

Our study topic thus concerns the civil society. Olivier Glassey<sup>9</sup> wrote a very interesting doctoral thesis in the same domain while focusing on the management of Virtual Communities. One will discover in his work a very good example of my point: in order to explain and understand what a community is, Glassey referred to a book written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>10</sup> that explained the difference between a community and a society. The explanation was based on the observation of the community as a whole, and never on the community as a group of people, each of them with their individual attitude towards the others and their freedom of mind. This is what I call the top-down approach of the problem. In my own work, I plan to differ in particular on that point of view. In my opinion in effect, one of the major effects of ICT and the Internet on the society is precisely this unprecedented empowerment of the in-

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<sup>8</sup> In their initial enthusiasm for e-government during the late 1990s, OECD countries tended to view e-government as an end in itself. Early e-government initiatives focused on the widespread application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the production and dissemination of information; putting as much information and as many services online as possible was the measure of success. Today, however, with the experience gained in planning and implementing e-government, coupled with continuing pressures to improve government productivity, governments have begun to integrate e-government into the effort to ensure better and more modern government.; E-GOVERNMENT FOR BETTER GOVERNMENT – ISBN 92-64-01833-6 – © OECD 2005

<sup>9</sup> Olivier GLASSEY; 2005; LE MANAGEMENT DES COMMUNAUTÉS VIRTUELLES: ORGANISATION DES PROCESSUS SOCIOTECHNIQUES, VERS UN MODÈLE GÉNÉRIQUE; Lausanne EPFL

<sup>10</sup> Tönnies, F; (1960); *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

dividual. However, in the light of the present reflections around the communicating society, it is easy to observe that governments, businesses, organisations still consider that mass communication is and has to be asymmetrical. This attitude is certainly a result of vertical organisations. However, as a reaction, the existence of virtual communities and their recent developments in the direction of collaborative spaces show us that people – individuals – are no longer willing to accept this asymmetry.

With this in mind, it may seem obvious that we should start our study of the situation and the future of NGOs from that centre point and move sideward. In this respect, Social Psychology seems a good starting point though the role of other sciences in the reflection, like political sciences, institutional economics, institutional analysis and the sciences of organisation should not be diminished.

### **1.7.3 A move to more horizontal organisations**

It is Men that, when organising, exchanging and communicating in groups and groups of groups, eventually form the Society. Horizontality is a specific form of a balanced, networked, dynamic, hybrid, post-bureaucratic or post-industrial organisation of the society that replaces man at the centre of a meshed network of interrelations, even if, in that perspective, there are as many centres as there are men. Old, proven, static, vertical, hierarchical organisations tend to create command structures above men. These last forms of organisations have a cost; they take the risk to subjugate men rather than serve them and they might well be less and less acceptable in the communication society.

## **1.8 Sociology and Social Psychology to support e-Government projects**

Social scientists<sup>11</sup> are providing invaluable assistance to find the answers, in particular when they demonstrate that ICTs and societal changes are mutually influenced and are intricately interconnected. Thus, reflecting and planning e-government from the sole ICT specialist point of view is probably too reductive, as it does not take into account the societal changes. It may consequently lead to errors and mistakes that would put expensive projects at high risk. I do not pretend that engineers<sup>12</sup> and ICT specialists are not capable of leading e-Government projects, not at all. They will be indeed the best at designing systems architecture and implementing solutions. They will be also the only ones capable of researching and identifying problems and finding well thought solutions to any technical issue that they encounter. Nevertheless, social scientists will provide their part on most other aspects.

### **1.8.1 A new role for Social Psychology in an interconnected society?**

Among sociologists called to solve problems, those issued from the social psychology will contribute to the understanding of the how and why people build relations among themselves. Their findings will help us understand some of the present problems of vertical or-

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Erik NEVEU (2005) ; Manuel Castells (1978, 2001)

<sup>12</sup> As a telecommunication engineer, I worked for 35 years in this industry. I took part – at my modest level – at the construction of some of the infrastructures that permitted the Informatization Revolution. Time came for me now to try to understand why I did what I did and for whom. That is the reason why I discovered, from my perspective, all the benefit we can draw from the social sciences and the explanation they may give us. I wish to encourage engineers at the start of their career to think about the implication of their work on Society.

organisations and give us clues of the potential benefits of the new horizontal ones. I shall refer frequently to these findings. In effect, the layers of reflection exposed above pushed me to start my study with Man. He is the reason of everything in our societies. As we have seen, Social Psychology studies and exposes the causes of individual behaviour, Sociology and Organisations Theories observe and study the effects of this behaviour to coordinate and achieve tasks. Good governance also tends to produce effects on the subjects, the citizens like the residents. Behaving as observed by the social behaviour studies, Man is in return the reason and the cause of Governance projects.

In this context and in addition to attempting to a throughout definition of civil society, I found the study topics below interesting in order to get a good and usable understanding of the subject:

- How groups organize themselves to achieve their goals or, in other words, the origins of associations,
- How they define their goals,
- How then plan to find, use and create tools and means to reach their goals,
- Finally, to what extent ICT plays a role in Group Processes, either active or passive.

Communication in all its aspects became my second subject of interest, as we shall see below. Let us however start with the beginning, the ICT Revolution.

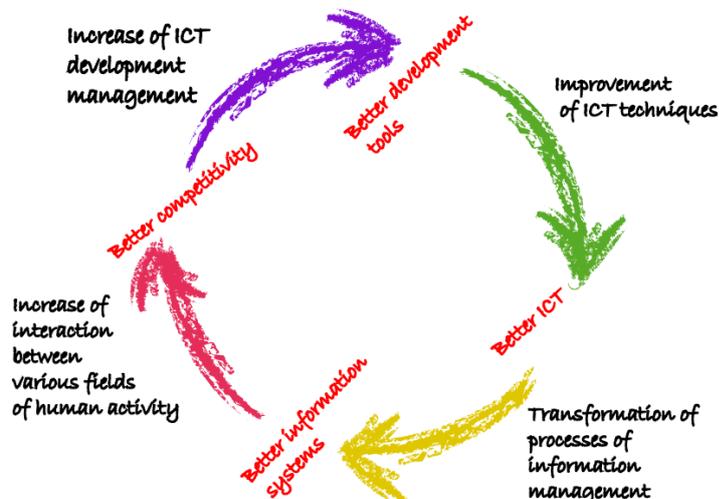


Figure 2 - The virtuous circle of ICT development

pects of human activity. Despite the effective and well-documented inequality of access to the Internet, known as the “digital divide,” this growth trend is fast and steady.

Referring back to the precedent Industrial Revolution, let us remember that it had concrete, evident but very diverse effects on most countries, the depth of these effects having been mostly dependant on local conditions. Among these conditions figured the ability of a particular country to adopt early and to transform its social structures to adapt to the new paradigms of a revolutionary technological environment. This remains true with the new ICT Revolution. It differs however sensibly from the precedent Industrial one on many aspects. I shall come to this point later in this thesis, but for now, let us consider first the **virtuous circle of knowledge building and information technology development**, shown in Figure 2 -

## 1.9 Effects of the ICT Revolution

The new ICT Revolution started 30 years ago with the invention of microelectronics and the Internet, the ICTs. The e- prefix, found for instance in e-Health, e-Learning, e-Commerce and many others, is a good indication of how much the ICT Revolution touched and continues to do so not only governments but eventually all as-

The virtuous circle of ICT development and elegantly described by Castells (CASTELLS, 1996/2000) in his trilogy “*The Information Age; Economy, Society and Culture*”. This virtuous circle is the basic engine and the real power of the paradigm created by the ICT Revolution as it feeds itself from its products by an unprecedented speed. This may be why one of its consequences, its effects on the Societies, will be much deeper and much stronger than that of the previous Revolution. It already acted on the way societies organise themselves, but it will also have a major influence on the prosperity of the nations. Finally, it creates a network of wealth that has the perverse effect of strongly harming those that do not belong to its network.

The United States, for example, gets an important part of its wealth out of intellectual property rights, in other words out of licence fees whose distribution is Internet based, as Figure 3 shows.

Another virtuous circle feeds the ICT Revolution: the globalisation of the markets, made possible by the globalisation of information and knowledge that in turn induces globalisation of new sides of economy and induce new forms of Internet based horizontal networked organisations like Wikipedia for instance, that in turn feeds further globalisation of the markets.

I engaged myself in a reflection about e-Government in order to get a clearer understanding of its full context, in particular how it may transform itself towards e-Governance. I found out that one of the most important things to start with was to understand, to the widest extent possible, the real mutual impacts of ICTs and the Society. We are all familiar with the way



Figure 3 - Royalties and License Fees Export Balance in 2002

ICTs entered into the offices, into the industry and even at home for the majority of us. We will probably also understand that the software industry moved according to the requirements of businesses, their major and first customers. In that context, it may seem obvious that e-Government is simply a translation of business processes into administrative processes of governments. Is it this simple and exhaustive? Where does the Civil Society stand in this picture?

## 1.10 Government and Civil Society e-Interrelations

Civil Society is invisible. In effect, during the course of this executive master programme, or searching Internet, I found no clues that governments consider the Civil Society in their eGov reflection. Further searching the web for traces of ‘e-NGO’ or ‘e-Civil Society’ gave no more result. However, the ICT Revolution builds a network of power, and very clearly, those that do not belong to this network will stay on the side of the road. In the game of inter-relations between the Civil Society and State, is it what all the stakeholders really want? Actually, what is Civil Society? There is no real easy and simple answer to that question, as we shall see below in paragraph 3.1.

Civil Society, from their members’ point of view, has to supplement or correct deficiencies of State. These deficiencies may be specific to a certain subject, or perceived because of inappropriate decisions of the government, but State will change thanks to e-Governance. The e-Civil Society might also have to adopt new forms of organisations to answer very specific needs that cannot, for practical reasons or for lack of interest, be solved by State.

Sociologists see the State as the only body that carries the right to exert legitimate violence on the individuals. Philosophies that tend to reject the grasp of State like libertarianism and anarchism start to think they could find in the Internet new and powerful ways to develop their influence on the society. This may help understand the burgeoning of the most recent excursions in the Internet, like the new “Web 2.0” Internet usages that might eventually affect the place of the Civil Society within the Society.

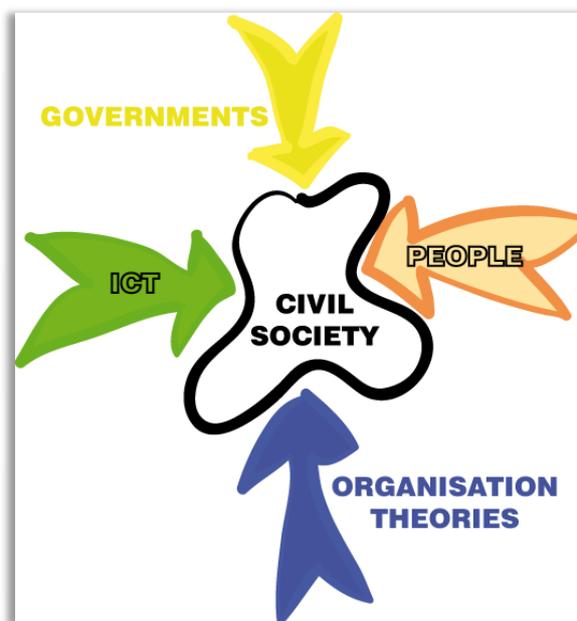


Figure 4 - Shaping the e-Civil Society



## 2 PROBLEM STATEMENT - THE PATH TO E-CIVIL SOCIETY

### 2.1 Initiative

The ICT Revolution threatens branches of the Civil Society in their existence just like any other sector of the society. On one hand, despite repeated declarations, governments never consider organisations of the civil society as stakeholders in their own e-Government projects. On another hand, the Civil Society, or more specifically the NGOs, appears to have no e-Governance plans and therefore accommodate themselves to their exclusion from the global information networks with the consequences that we foresee. Here are a first set of questions in my problem statement:

- Are the NGO aware of this situation?
- Do they accommodate to it?
- Do they lack the expertise or time and/or resources to develop e-governance project?
- Do they have other priorities?
- Do they have their own ideas on the subject, and do not consider my thesis as relevant?

### 2.2 An NGO's motivations to participate in e-Civil Society

The reasons for the participation of an NGO in the e-Civil Society are difficult to assume. I propose arbitrarily to choose the following axis:

- Firstly, I assume the western “centricity” of this reflection. Western democratic countries tend to accept better NGOs than less democratic ones where they pose different challenges to the power in place.
- Secondly, local and national layers of civil society are of course highly dependent on the type of local government for their own purposes, motivations, objectives and organisation. As we shall also see, Civil Society defines itself by its individual actions and communication. NGOs have ‘core businesses’ that they could carry out more efficiently and more effectively by a good e-Governance.
- Thirdly, I centre the reflection on a particular NGO according to its type, its creators and reasons why, its hidden agenda, is it democratic, etc. This represents the NGO’s unique culture and many NGOs’ culture often opposes the use of ICTs.

#### 2.2.1 An example with IUCN

During the course of the eGov 2006/7 master studies, I started reflecting on an innovative and practical project about ‘transforming’ one aspect of the organisation of an NGO, namely **the Red List of Threatened Species of the IUCN**<sup>13</sup> (World Conservation Union).

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<sup>13</sup> See paragraph 2.4.3 for details on the IUCN’s Red List

We know today that one of the first incentive for governments to engage in e-Government projects is the pressure exerted on them by the people, the citizen's and all residents who affect and are affected by the governmental decisions and are themselves ICT users. E-Government and even further good e-Governance will eventually change the relationships between the citizen and the State as well as among the people themselves, this especially with regards to the Civil Society.

My initial practical project intended to demonstrate the necessity or the benefits for NGOs, as they are the most often mentioned representatives of the Civil Society, to adapt to this change. This opportunity clearly opened a wide range of questions, in particular on how and why make this change and in which context. It allowed me in particular to think about new forms of organisation. I expected to use a personal finding of my previous professional experience of telecommunication infrastructures builder in which I had the opportunity to observe the immense potential of horizontality in meshed fibre-optic networks. I imagined transposing that interesting and powerful concept to organised forms of social networks, though I knew that social networks are much more complex than physical networks and that it might not be reasonable to compare. However, we are in a changing environment that is favourable to challenging any preconceived idea. Horizontality seemed a path interesting to explore and I tried to illustrate its power of enhancement with the example of “merging” the reputation and seriousness of the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species<sup>14</sup> with the visibility and efficiency of Wikipedia, with the results that we shall see.

The project in itself started on a low level with the simple idea of implementing an e-Government project within an environmental NGO, the focus being that nowadays, any organisation needs ICT to enhance the efficiency of its administration and eventually the effectiveness of its activity with regard to its declared objectives. A further level of reflection pushed me to think about bringing propositions to transform – some of – the structures of the NGO towards more horizontal ones to take better into account the potential of transformation that imbeds into ICTs and the Internet.

Alas, the major result was that **the IUCN** – that I considered as an NGO for the purpose of my research – **rejected my proposals** and decided, probably by chance, to hire a new employee in its organisation – that will remain vertical for long – in order to make a better use the new communication media offered by the “Communication Society”. I think the decision of the IUCN was wise and it inspired me to take the helicopter view to enlarge the reflection.

To summarize, in my path of thoughts, I climbed levels from the first one, searching on how to improve an existing environmental NGO's organisation with ICT, to the second one: how to improve a specific organisation with new structures towards better governance. A third level became the subject of my Master Thesis: how to identify the different prerequisites to develop e-Civil Society.

## 2.2.2 From Civil Society to NGO to IUCN

As we shall see in our attempts to define the concepts of Civil Society and NGO, both are very vague and cover a very broad scope. Therefore, in order to keep within certain practical limits, we shall concentrate on one particular NGO, among all the different NGOs of all

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<sup>14</sup> See paragraph 2.4 for details on the IUCN

types. After an excursion in the realm of Civil Society, we shall then study whether that particular NGO is a part of that Civil Society, not from a general perspective, if such perspective exists, but according to the vision that each of that NGO's partner might have of that concept.

### 2.2.3 Target NGO

I decided, purely arbitrarily, to choose among the tens of thousands of different NGOs, a well-known important international NGO, acting as policy advisor to national governments. Protection of the environment has become for the nations one of the major issues they have to face today. However, because of the long-term scope and diffused and cross-border impacts, they are still among the least susceptible to attract the concrete and practical attention of politicians. Many NGOs choose to show a global responsibility to contribute to solve environmental problems. For convenience notably, I did choose the IUCN (International Union for World Conservation) – see detail below – as my target NGO. We all know better the WWF or Greenpeace than the IUCN, but the latter is nevertheless among the majors, it is well renowned among specialists, benefits of an excellent reputation of seriousness among its peers and its achievements have a certain influence on the attitude of many governments with regard to environment protection.

It is my hypothesis that the day e-NGO and networked structures – both concepts we shall detail later in chapter 2 – eventually demonstrate positive results in IUCN's efficiency, the dissemination of acquired knowledge will have a stronger impact; even in the case it would become a less influential NGO. Its global nature is also a very important factor. IUCN has the potential to influence almost every country on Earth, considering the broad spectrum of its members.

Yet it remained accessible to me thanks to the kind understanding of Ms Jeanrenaud<sup>15</sup> who accepted at some point that I choose her organisation for my study. Should my project demonstrate its ability to increase the efficiency of the organisation at an affordable cost, it could then serve as an example for further improvements at other levels and in other similar organisations as well.

Among the different responsibilities of the IUCN, I did choose the Red List of Threatened Species as my main subject of study. I shall come to more details about it at paragraph 2.4 below.

## 2.3 E-Governance develops at the expense of Civil Society

Governmental Institutions, despite their efforts to increase participation of the citizens in the State's affairs and their tendency to be organised with the citizen in mind, still consider that they are as the only legitimate institutions to govern people's lives. The citizens themselves largely share this idea. E-Governance aims at better government, not really at transforming the government. Efforts made towards e-democracy and towards the ubiquitous society eventually tend to isolate the citizen. The Civil Society cannot survive this trend unharmed without deeply transforming itself. We all know that it is useless to resist change like the one provoked by the ICT Revolution when it is so deep. Nevertheless, change has begun without visible reactions from the part of Civil Society. NGO Governance is crucial in that respect as

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<sup>15</sup> JEANRENAUD Sally, special assistant to the Director General of IUCN

NGO somewhat incarnates the Civil Society. In effect, NGOs face the same responsibilities and accountability towards the public than the governments at similar levels. NGOs finally face the same sort of problems that governments face when embarking in e-Governance projects. We are even inclined to think that, for most of them, because of their limited resources, they can share experience with developing countries when facing e-Government implementation.

However, so far, e-NGO seems an un-explored territory. We know no NGO that has actually e-Governance or even e-Government plans. Of course, some of them use ICT but e-Government is more than that.

### 2.3.1 E-Governance of the Civil Society

The usual development phases from e-Government to e-Governance are typically:

- Provide Information (simple web presence, at best provides existing documents to download). Most developed e-NGOs are today at this stage;
- Interaction (for instance allow e-mail);
- Symmetrical transaction;
- Transform the Institutions to grab further the potential of ICT.

It has become common sense that ICT has a tremendous impact on our economy and on the organisation of most enterprises. Since the advent of these technologies, businesses, that were first to take advantage of the new ICT tools, enhanced notably their productivity and efficiency. The traditional fields of application range from internal organisation, to reduce costs and increase efficiency, to B2B<sup>16</sup> or B2C to increase communication as well as efficiency of business processes, the latter being widely known as eCommerce. Under public pressure of people becoming more and more convinced users of personal ICT, governments, at different levels, slowly adapt themselves and adopt ICT; in turn they provide citizens - or under NPM<sup>17</sup> regime “clients” - and residents with more comfort when dealing with the administrative procedures.

On another hand, NGOs feel under less pressure. It is true that they are often confronted with financial problems that may encourage them to improve efficiency with the use of ICT, but they do not feel this pressure from the public, as there are no such direct links between NGOs and the public as there are in eCommerce (B2C) or in eGovernment (G2C). There are only very few ‘N2C’ relations.

This does not mean that NGOs can avoid developing e-NGO. In effect, as the institutions (business and government) move forward with the help of ICT and different sort of pressures, NGOs cannot lag behind. However, as one can define the State's eGov preparedness in the four phases mentioned above, one can do so with the NGOs only to observe that most of them still do not even aim at the first phase.

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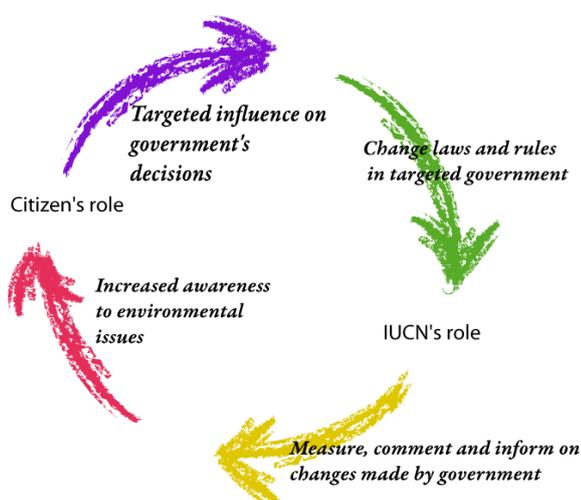
<sup>16</sup> B2B : Business to business ; B2C : Business to customer

<sup>17</sup> New Public Management

## 2.4 The Role of IUCN in the Civil Society

The IUCN is one of the major environmental organisations and the milieu of environmental protection knows it very well. I nevertheless wonder if the public knows it enough<sup>18</sup>. This is indeed a point to check and eventually to consider for improvement. In my opinion, it is very important that, though the major members of IUCN are States, the citizens of these States – and more generally the citizens of the World - should be more aware of the work done by the IUCN. They would acknowledge then that the IUCN holds a crucial role in environmental protection – including preservation of biodiversity – and that they, the citizens, by acting on their governments, could counteract short-term objectives and therefore favour IUCN's longer-term objectives.

### 2.4.1 IUCN's Objectives and Achievements<sup>19</sup> relevant to the present study



Conservation of biodiversity, as I said above, besides climate change, is one of the major challenges of our present time. It seems at hand, to some exceptions<sup>20</sup>, and achievable at shorter term than the “management” of climate change.

To contribute to the achievement of its objectives of biodiversity conservation and raise awareness in the interested circles, the IUCN publishes and maintains a “**Red List of Threatened Species.**”

### 2.4.2 IUCN's Sponsors<sup>21</sup>

Though I said that it would not be the object of my study, I think that it is important to keep al-

Figure 5 - Citizens and IUCN shared objectives

ways in mind that the IUCN, like any NGOs and any organisation, needs resources to fulfil its objectives. Any change introduced in the organisation should take care of making the IUCN donor base larger.

<sup>18</sup> Listen for example to former French President's speech : <mms://vipmms9.yacast.net/elysee/06-12-12-0784.wma>; accessed 31/12/06

<sup>19</sup> See: <http://www.iucn.org/en/about/> ; accessed 31/12/06

<sup>20</sup> Whaling: ANCHORAGE, Alaska, May 28, 2007 (ENS) - The future of the International Whaling Commission as a whole is at stake this week as delegates from the 75 IWC member nations debate issues that range from the current moratorium on commercial whaling, to Japan's research whaling expeditions that kill hundreds of whales each year. In its opening statement today, Japan said that because it views the collapse of the IWC as a "real possibility," the government of Japan hosted a conference on "Normalization of the IWC" in February of this year. Half the IWC member nations boycotted the conference, but still the outcome document is on the agenda for discussion by the full IWC this week. IUCN is the organisation that provide data to the IWC

<sup>21</sup> See : <http://www.iucn.org/en/about/donors.htm> ; accessed on 31/12/06

### 2.4.3 The Red List of Threatened Species

IUCN's web site<sup>22</sup> publishes a 'Red List of Threatened Species' that was first set up in 1954 (HOLDGATE, 1999) by specialists belonging to the IUCN and is maintained by the organisation and a network of member NGOs, their volunteers or other third parties. It remains under the strict supervision of IUCN. It is one of the most important products of the IUCN and its maintenance is crucial for the existence of IUCN.

An important and extremely vertical structure is in place to maintain and develop the list. However, the situation changes and raises a new question: should IUCN open the Red List in order to make it THE ULTIMATE LIST OF SPECIES notably with regard to the upcoming competition? There is competition indeed. Let us mention for example a subset of Wikipedia<sup>23</sup>: Wikispecies and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility<sup>24</sup> a very recent initiative that despite IUCN's perception hurts its list frontally. I mention also ARKive<sup>25</sup>, a project sponsored in particular by HP and the NGO Conservation International<sup>26</sup> that maintains an impressive web site. My hypothesis that if IUCN's list could be the world scientific and public reference in the matter of species inventory and taxonomy, then the objectives of IUCN with regard to conservation of biodiversity would draw a higher benefit from that situation.

IUCN and the Red List are probably very good examples of trust and reliability based on a strong vertical structure. This is challenging when you consider transforming this structure to a more horizontal one.

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<sup>22</sup> See: <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/redlist.htm> ; accessed on 31/12/06

<sup>23</sup> See : [http://species.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://species.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) ; accessed on 31/12/06

<sup>24</sup> See: <http://www.gbif.org/Stories/STORY1082130657>; accessed on 04/06/2007

<sup>25</sup> See [http://h41087.www4.hp.com/presse/temps\\_forts/arkive.html](http://h41087.www4.hp.com/presse/temps_forts/arkive.html); accessed on 18/06/2007

<sup>26</sup> See <http://www.conservation.org/English/Pages/Default.aspx>; accessed on 20/07/07

### **3 THEORY OF THE E-CIVIL SOCIETY**

#### **3.1 The Civil Society**

##### **3.1.1 A positive definition**

The Civil Society has become again very trendy lately, especially in the political arena. However, who can pretend to really know what it is? Talking about Civil Society is like talking about human society: it is a matter of forms, of functions, of culture, of purposes. Defining by exclusion is the simplest, most straightforward and most frequent definition: it is what is left when you remove from the whole society the governmental and private sector. This widely used definition is not a definition indeed. If it appears to have the advantage of being 'clear and simple', its complete uselessness largely disadvantages it.

I shall therefore define the Civil Society by its substance and not by its absence. To defend this societal body, I need to know why it exists and reject definitions that say what it is not. The Civil Society is a universe, its members can be scientific societies, humanitarian societies that deal with church, civic or philanthropic affairs, they are secret societies, guilds, fraternities, or monastic societies, they have many forms and they renew themselves constantly.

Finally, one adopts a definition of the Civil Society according to the context of its usage. For example, the Civil Society in the United Nations acceptance has nothing in common with the Civil Society for a regional government or for an NGO.

When you observe that governments of democratic countries happen to create or promote the creation of institutions of the "Civil Society," to carry out externally tasks they cannot or are not willing to accomplish by themselves, ask yourself the question: Are those institutions Civil Society? Common sense would answer that they are probably not. Nevertheless, all the NGOs are part of the Civil Society. We cannot therefore seriously discuss about the governance of NGO without having a minimal understanding of the basic concept of Civil Society as State is supposed to interface with the Civil Society.

Social psychology helps to understand how and why people gather in groups to form discrete elements of a Civil Society and contributes to the reflection that eventually gives answers to the whom, what, how, with whom and for whom we need a Civil Society.

These diversities will not allow us to determine whether the IUCN has its place or not within the Civil Society. Effectively, on one hand, it is a non-profit organisation, it is also a self-organising community of common interest, and the UN most likely calls it Civil Society. However, on the other hand, we know that some states or state's organisations, beside other non-profit organisations, are members of the IUCN. Individuals cannot be members of IUCN<sup>27</sup>. Individuals should at least be admissible in an organisation before it is entitled Civil Society.

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<sup>27</sup> Who can be a member? – States - Government agencies - Political/economic integration organizations - National and international non-governmental organizations. Individuals can only become members of the six IUCN Commissions, namely: - Ecosystems Management; Environment Education and Communication; Environmental Law; Environment, Economics and Social Policy; Protected Areas, and Species Survival; <http://www.iucn.org/members/application.htm>; accessed on 06.06.07

### 3.1.2 The historical evolution of the concept of Civil Society

The concept of Civil Society evolved considerably over the years and still carries, in its multiple forms, traces of that evolution. Aristotle was first to describe it, Thomas Aquinas (13<sup>th</sup> C.) reinterpreted and gave it the name we still use and Adam Fergusson<sup>28</sup> modernized it. Originally, it is *a perfect human grouping, self-sufficing with an objective of temporal happiness of the human and harmony between its members*. The community, “sovereign between all and which includes all the others,” becomes the “city or political community”. This definition is very demanding but idealists will like it in its simplicity. Perfect and self-sufficing, harmony between its members demonstrates this ideal where decisions are made within the group without the need of an external power. Modern libertarians would approve this ideal. The next evolution is a product of the Age of Enlightenment, notably Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (18<sup>th</sup> C.). “*The civil society is the higher human grouping, born out of the will of the individuals and instituted in the common utility to allow the individuals and the families to escape the state of nature where the war of all against all reign and where no durable co-operation is even thinkable. In order to live on beyond its creation, the civil society needs a sovereign, capable to express the will of all and to make it respected*”. What is interesting with that evolution is that this ‘Civil Society’ prefigures the modern state! No one would agree with this vision today.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Civil Society becomes a group of interested individuals, a non-political society, separated or even opposed to the state. However, its evolution makes it promoting the socialist revolution by organizing this new ideology and diffusing it through alternative channels. Many politicians that see it as an organized opponent to the state still schematically perceive this evolution of the meaning of Civil Society today as its true ‘hidden’ definition. The Civil Society is all but the state, then it becomes all against the state. Confronted to the failure of the socialist ideal that thought that Civil Society would incarnate the new society and the state, intellectuals restore the idea that it opposes the state in any form. The end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century tries to neutralize it: “*The Civil Society is the economic, social and cultural life of individuals, families, companies and associations insofar as this life is held apart from the state and kept without political aiming*”. Now again, in what is known as the seventh stage of development of the Civil Society, its role as a counter power reappears: Nicanor Perlas in his work “*Shaping Globalization: Civil Society, Cultural Power, and Three folding*”<sup>29</sup> represents Civil Society as a movement organised against the globalisation of markets.

This perception of the Civil Society explains the difficulty we still have in defining it outside of its context.

## 3.2 The place of the Civil Society

### 3.2.1 Its relation to the State and communication

Civil Society is opposed to the state. State in return, by making and enforcing law, intervenes in the national Civil Society organisations. Since the end of last century, Civil Society receded and political/commercial society advanced in terms of their impact on people's life-

<sup>28</sup> (FERGUSSON, 1782)

<sup>29</sup> PERLAS Nicanor; 2007; “*Shaping Globalization: Civil Society, Cultural Power, and Threefolding*”; Center for Alternative Development Initiatives (CADI)

styles, precisely because of the impacts of the changes in communication becoming more and more horizontal.

Civil society, like the private sector, is based on choice and voluntary participation, whereas the state is based on coercion. Communication becomes therefore an essential element in the existence of Civil Society organisations. However, for some years now, at least in the western world, groups – organisations – as such have received a rather bad press. On another hand, governments and professional associations proclaim the virtues of the individual enterprise and denigrate policies aimed at promoting social welfare and collective responsibility often with very good reasons. State has a better control on communication as we shall see below. This situation clearly poses a dilemma to institutions like the IUCN that need both state and Civil Society to pursue their objectives.

### 3.2.2 Civil Society's relations with international organisations

The IUCN is an international NGO, that often directly or indirectly through its members, reports to international organisations. For example, the recent World Summit on the Information Society assigned multiple roles to and frequently mentioned the 'Civil Society' as such in its declarations related to an 'Information Society'<sup>30</sup>. When the ITU prepared the gathering, it did what all international institutions do nowadays; it specifically included 'Civil Society' representatives in the list of guests. While attending the conference, I asked many representatives invited in the name of the Civil Society to define it. I realised that there were as many definitions as participants.

One can trace back this trend to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and its accompanying NGO Forum. The Stockholm Declaration recognised the important role of citizens, communities, enterprises and institutions at every level, in achieving its environmental goal<sup>31</sup>. Although NGOs have organized influential campaigns and global policy initiatives, international law does not formally recognize them. State sovereignty remains the fundamental principle in international relations. However, from the point of view of international organisations, "governments increasingly view NGOs as indispensable partners".

There is of course more to say about the Civil Society and for those who are interested, the web address below<sup>32</sup> will provide a longer version of this paragraph on Civil Society.

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<sup>30</sup> "Governments, as well as private sector, civil society and the United Nations and other international organizations have an important role and responsibility in the development of the Information Society and, as appropriate, in decision-making processes. Building a people-centred Information Society is a joint effort which requires cooperation and partnership among all stakeholders"; "Governments have a leading role in developing and implementing comprehensive, forward-looking and sustainable national e-strategies. The private sector and civil society, in dialogue with governments, have an important consultative role to play in devising national e-strategies." WSIS Geneva 2003.

<sup>31</sup> UNEP strategic paper on « Enhancing Civil Society Engagement in the work of the United Nations Environment Programme »

<sup>32</sup> See <http://jacques.gamboni.org> ; accessed on 24/07/07

## 3.3 The Non Governmental Organisation

### 3.3.1 Definition

The Encyclopaedia Britannica gives us a very good and exhaustive definition of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO)<sup>33</sup> that we can adopt. Let us however add a few comments.

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<sup>33</sup> Defined by Voluntary group of individuals or organizations, usually not affiliated with any government, that is formed to provide services or to advocate a public policy. Although some NGOs are for-profit corporations, the vast majority are non-profit organizations. Some NGOs, particularly those based in authoritarian countries, may be created or controlled by governments. By most definitions, political parties and criminal or violent guerrilla organizations are not considered NGOs. The issues addressed by NGOs run the gamut of human concerns (e.g., human rights, environmental protection, disaster relief, and development assistance), and the scope of their activities may be local, national, or international. Some NGOs fulfil quasi-governmental functions for ethnic groups that lack a state of their own. NGOs may be financed by private donations, international organizations, governments, or a combination of these.

NGOs have existed for centuries; indeed, in 1910 some 130 international groups organized a coordinating body called the Union of International Associations. The term nongovernmental organization was coined at about the time of the founding of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 to distinguish private organizations from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the UN itself. Many large international NGOs, such as Amnesty International, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Oxfam International, CARE, Save the Children, and the World Wildlife Fund, are transnational federations of national groups. Other international NGOs, such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club, are mass-membership organizations. Most NGOs are small, grassroots organizations not formally affiliated with any international body, though they may receive some international funding for local programs.

NGOs perform a variety of functions. They provide information and technical expertise to governments and international organizations (such as specialized agencies of the UN) on various international issues, often supplying local information unavailable to governments. NGOs may advocate on behalf of specific policies, such as debt relief or the banning of landmines (e.g., the International Campaign to Ban Landmines), and they may provide humanitarian relief and development assistance (e.g., the Red Cross, Oxfam, and CARE). NGOs may also monitor human rights or the implementation of environmental regulations (e.g., the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Transparency International).

Since World War II—and particularly since the 1970s—NGOs have proliferated, especially at the national and local levels. At the international level, large numbers of NGOs have been created to address issues such as human rights, women's rights, and environmental protection. At the same time, international NGOs have become important actors in world affairs within the UN and its specialized agencies and within other forums. A variety of factors have contributed to the growth of NGOs, including globalization; the increasing prominence of transnational issues such as those just mentioned; the growth in UN-sponsored global conferences, which often include parallel NGO forums; the communications revolution, which has linked individuals and groups through facsimile (fax), the Internet, and e-mail; and the spread of democracy, which has bolstered civil society and enabled individuals to form and operate organizations more freely. By the early 21st century, there were some 6,000 recognized international NGOs.

Although NGOs vary considerably in size, organization, and approach, they share the basic belief that principled individuals working together can do much to solve human and environmental problems through grassroots organizing, the creative use of information, and sophisticated political strategies. NGOs have played central roles in global campaigns against slavery, the trade in ivory, whaling, violence against women, apartheid in South Africa, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

NGOs exert influence on the policies and programs of governments and IGOs by observing or participating in the meetings at which norms, principles, treaties, and conventions are negotiated, disputes settled, and resources allocated. Although the UN's members are states, Article 71 of the UN Charter authorizes the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to grant consultative status to NGOs. In the early 21st century, more than 2,000 NGOs were officially accredited with consultative status. Accredited NGOs are automatically granted the right to participate in UN-sponsored conferences, though each conference has different rules for the

### 3.3.2 Spectrum of NGOs

The spectrum of NGOs is very wide: on one end, we find local organisations, constituted of small groups of volunteers, and gathered around an altruistic idea. On the other end, we see multinational organisations, with hundreds of millions of dollars of annual budget and thousands of paid employees, constituted around the need to coordinate and carry on certain tasks that State cannot or is not willing to achieve. There are hundreds of thousands of NGOs. There are probably not as many definitions but similarly with the Civil Society, there appears to be no common definition of NGO. Why is that so? How does it define itself?

This thesis has for objective the study of the transformation of NGOs' governance, by the means of ICT. It is quite clear that in order to transform an institution, one has to know it and the environment into which it acts and produce effects. A good definition of the concept of NGO seemed a good point to start with. Besides, definitions and observations tend to confirm that most NGOs belong to the Civil Society, though there are exceptions, particularly at the international level.

### 3.3.3 UICN

In order to better understand the IUCN, we should know whether it defines itself as an NGO or not, as well as how it compares with the ordinary definition of NGO? Equally, we shall need to know whether instead IUCN thinks it should to be compared with other forms of organisations, like international organisation or businesses for example. Effectively, big NGOs have important budgets and important human resources. It happens that high ranked civil servants like to feel like businessmen. Likewise, the risk for NGOs executives of mixing positions exists in important NGOs. The border between NGOs and businesses thus tends to blur voluntarily or unconsciously. This will of course affect the reflection about the move to e-NGO of such organisation. A too strong identification with corporation's mind might perfectly affect the credibility and the potential of reaching the goals.

## 3.4 Influences on NGOs

Many analysis, but also my own experience, show that important NGOs tend to recreate the vertical forms or organisation that exist in the private sector, they function largely similarly

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participation of other NGOs, particularly local ones. Beyond the UN, other IGOs set their own guidelines for NGO participation.

NGOs are influential because of their expertise and their access to important sources of information. As a result, a significant share of development aid and humanitarian relief is now channelled through such organizations. In some cases, however, the sheer number of NGOs as well as their diversity makes it difficult for them to develop a coordinated approach to certain problems. Another factor that tends to limit their effectiveness is their perceived lack of representativeness. Many international NGOs, for example, claim to speak for the peoples of Africa, Asia, or Latin America, though their leadership is drawn almost exclusively from Europe or North America.

Since the late 20th century, some governments have reacted to the growing power and influence of NGOs by accusing them of being undemocratic and accountable only to those who provide them with funding. Other governments have attempted to prevent certain NGOs from participating in international decision-making forums. Despite these difficulties, NGOs continue to play an important role in developing global norms and rules on a wide range of transnational issues.

"nongovernmental organization." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 30 May 2007 <<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9395824>>.

to the other social bodies that they should compensate the deficiencies: these organisations tend to dysfunction and their verticality, namely, is very strong.

### 3.4.1 Organisation

Organisation theories, designed to businesses or State barely apply to the Civil Society. Traditional organisation theories tend to draw a picture of a particular type of organisation designed to accomplish a particular set of tasks.

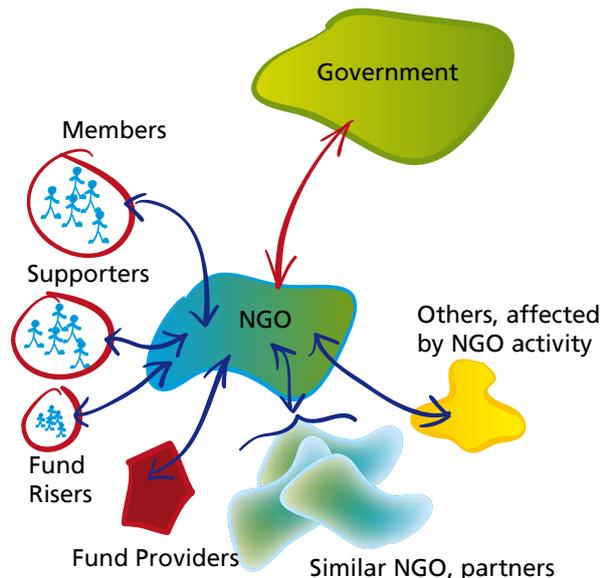


Figure 6 - Influences on the Civil Society

Organisations are seldom designed around objectives, either tactic or strategic, even the so-called management by objectives. In effect, organisations are more often defined around functions and processes. Vertical organisations need stability to be effective. They are therefore static. True horizontal organisations, born out of the technological world, are more dynamic by definition. They are supposed to appear spontaneously as the need appears, to self organize according to their goals, objectives, means and resources and to disappear as they have contributed to reach and consolidate their objectives. Likewise, the group dynamically assigns functions and processes result of interrelations between the different units of the dynamic organisation. This dynamism is naturally also source of flexibility.

### 3.4.2 From vertical to horizontal, flexible and federated organisations

One commonly admits that human organisations have to be hierarchical. Recent research is still clear about that. For example, Mintzberg, a well-known and often cited theorist of organisations, described the five basic elements of organisations that support and link the operational centre and the strategic summit along a hierarchical line (MINTZBERG, 1978).

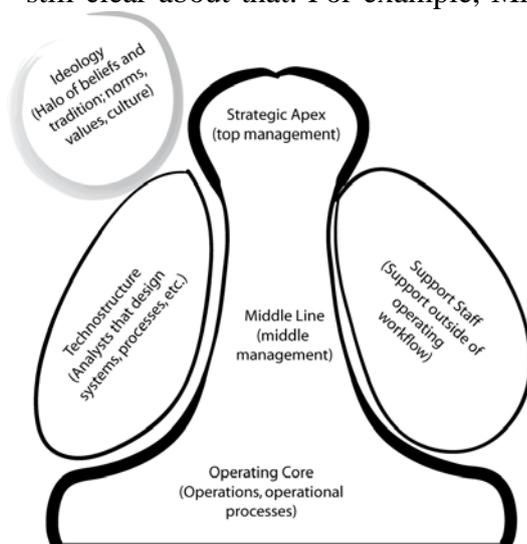


Figure 7- Five basic elements of organisations

However, my long experience with the telecommunication industry and network management has taught me the power of horizontal and flexible structures. There are numerous examples in the environment of similar behaviour. I will therefore try to show that the smooth transformation of classical and proven static vertical structures into basic horizontal, flexible and dynamic structures with the use of ICT and of their social impacts will enable very efficient access to information. Effective communication is a key to transform structures.

The tremendous change of scale introduced by ICTs

and the Internet – often quoted as a paradigm shift – has become a crucial factor of change that should affect as well the classical theories of organisation. The walls of the factory no longer bound the operational domain. Thanks to the Internet and effective data processing, this operational domain covers now the whole world.

On another hand, in my opinion and according to my experience, governments, like many other organisations, still use hierarchical vertical organisations. Such systems are very sensitive to ‘entropy’ increase: little or no horizontal communication exists between the different pillars that form such organisations they tend to devote more and more resources to sustain themselves. We even observe every day that, by adding layers over layers, the organisations just consolidate their ‘pillars’ rather than reach initial objectives. Going up to the international level, countries keep similar structures between themselves as nations form “ultra-structures”, vertical within verticality. On the other hand, the new economy demonstrates that new horizontal structures (of the peer-to-peer kind), enabled by a creative use of their ICT tools, allow today totally new and efficient ways of doing business. Eventually, these ventures prove so effective that they overthrow long established and powerful businesses that seemed indestructible only a few years ago, like in the music industry for example.

Nature itself demonstrates how efficient horizontal structures can be. Let us take the human brain for instance. Very recent research (MARKRAM, 2006) teaches us that, in order for the brain to solve unprecedented problems, the nerve cell networks are capable of building necessary communication links for that particular purpose and later abandon the links no longer usable. This is a real source of inspiration, as we all know that most inventions are in fact already present somewhere in the Nature. The problem is that some NGOs, by their history and their size, have recreated the verticality that is so specific to the State, with the typical pernicious operations of this kind of structure. The IUCN is such a structure, characterized by such vice of operation, which harms its own objectives to some extent.

People who form groups answer to deeply rooted psychological mechanisms as we have seen in a previous chapter, dynamic organisations have to consider seriously this factor. Nevertheless, as we know, communication is equally important in dynamic organisations.

### **3.4.3 Communication, globally speaking**

Communication, in all the meanings of the term, strongly influences the society in general and the Civil Society in particular. Governments and politicians all know this very well. We shall discuss this later in more details, but for the moment take into consideration the fact that from the 60s to the 80s, the society transformed itself considerably with the rise of the Communication Society. Then the so-called Mass Media – newspapers, television and advertising campaigns – were the essential means of communicating for the state. Mass Media played a key role in this turmoil of communication in which citizens were caught ensuring the smooth rotation of the virtuous circle of communication promotion and benefiting.

### **3.4.4 Governments, some like it, some not**

The relations between the Civil Society, the NGOs and governments are complex, ambiguous and much of the time troubled. The visible part of these relations appears through the mass media. To answer to the question where does IUCN situate itself in this context, let us take the top down approach and try to redefine the concept of NGO.

### 3.4.5 The role of NGOs in the democratic processes

We have seen that governments do not appreciate groups that are difficult to surround and control. It is thus not surprising that government hardly take into consideration Civil Society in their e-Governance plans. However, governments might well be the least to blame for this situation. In effect, many NGOs represent and organise groups of people who see no other solutions – political parties or trade unions represent no solution from their point of view - then gathering in self-organised pressure groups to intervene in governments' (democratic) decisions. We have seen as these organisations put themselves in opposition with the government, building non-official or non-conventional channels to influence political decisions. Political parties, that do not mix well with associations (to some exception where they feel able to take them surreptitiously under control); very often perceive them as non-democratic. To express this idea in a different manner, remember in the late 60s, that Richard Nixon coined the term of 'Silent Majority'<sup>34</sup> to neutralize the protesting Civil Society. As e-Governance is meant to increase participation of the citizens in political decisions making, we can foresee the apparition of an important problem. This is particularly the case at the local, regional and national level. E-Governance will give the word to the Silent Majority.

### 3.4.6 The role of NGOs as assistants to governments or institutions

On a totally other hand, we may find in many countries associations, possibly organised as NGOs, which play a very important role in providing additional or supplementary public services. These associations rely on the government or on religious or even political institutions for their financing and therefore as well to receive suggestions or orders. Naturally, they also rely on voluntary work and alternate sources of financing provided by their members. They are then accountable not only to their members or to beneficiaries, but also to the institution that backs them up. It is quite clear that this kind of NGO will have very different problems to solve regarding their e-Governance. One can even easily imagine that, depending on their importance in the government plans they become part of this government e-Governance plans.

### 3.4.7 International NGOs - Multinational and neutral

At the international level, the relations between NGOs and governments become much more complex. We find at this level for instance, some organisations of the 'Civil Society' that have probably lost their connections with the real Civil Society because of their size or because they exist for such a long time that they became self-sustained. I agree however that quite often these international NGO rely on local or national agencies. We shall find for instance, in that group, the International Red Cross but also the IUCN. The IUCN does not accept individual members; it becomes consequently difficult to admit this organisation in the Civil Society. Nevertheless, the IUCN will need eventually citizens to exert pressure on their government either to become member of IUCN or to change somewhat their environmental policies. How does the IUCN resolve this dilemma?

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<sup>34</sup> "And so tonight—to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans—I ask for your support." — Richard M. Nixon, November 3, 1969; <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/11/documents/nixon.speech/> ; accessed on 3rd Mai 2007

### 3.4.8 Focus on environment NGOs

IUCN situates in the arena of environment protection at the intergovernmental and governmental levels. It is a very high, visible and challenged position. Multinational institutions like the UN or international NGOs usually take the responsibility of global environmental problems. Some politicians seek too to benefit from this visibility like former president Chirac who tried to set up in Paris in February 2007 the creation of a new organisation.

Nowadays, NGOs that specialize in environment are generally first to raise environmental issues<sup>35</sup> that national governments might later endeavour to solve, usually with contributions from the scientific community, the Civil Society and representatives of the economy. This dual system introduces at best important delays in repair or preventive actions, but more often inaction because of political values governments take into consideration. These values are most generally the result of weighting of interests, NGOs being only one of the discussion partners as we have seen above.

On another hand, global markets, thanks to better management and better use of ICT tools, increase the impact of human activity on the environment. This has in return visible adverse effects not only on the environment itself but also on the economy. We have come now to a point where the need to find radical new ways of solving issues of environment protection is crucial, as the rate at which new problems appear tends to increase sharply and overtake the rate at which States solve these problems.

Environmental Problems are global. By essence, nations are not. Let us illustrate this with an example: the radioactive fallouts of Chernobyl stopped, on May 1 1986, at the French border...<sup>36</sup> but continued eventually their journey several days later when the information had to come out. Because, by definition, the Civil Society<sup>37</sup> can avoid national concerns, it is indeed the best actor to produce solutions and it does so largely. Nowadays, NGOs are inescapable, in that respect. We need them and expect them to be efficient, reliable and accountable. This request is legitimate and ICT are the right tools to allow good e-NGO governance. IUCN is one of those.

### 3.4.9 Flexible NGOs

NGOs might still play an important role after the transformation of institutions caused by the ICT Revolution at the condition that they are able to prepare themselves for this future. Governments are clearly becoming more and more concerned by the preservation of the environment. The consequences of climate change, to take this example, are not only visible but also visibly more and more expensive. Let us consider however the time that the first governments spent to react to the climate change. Finally, let us consider that governments still not address other very important issues of the preservation of the environment. We are thinking at the conservation of biodiversity for example that still only seems to concern the

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<sup>35</sup> Jean LEMIERRE; April 2004; <http://www.ebrd.com/new/stories/2004/040423.htm> ; “We pay a lot of attention to the dialogue we have together,” Mr Lemierre told the NGO gathering Tuesday. “We’re talking about important things: democracy, human rights, the environment, economic progress, social questions. It’s clear you bring a lot to us.”

<sup>36</sup> Société Française d’Energie Nucléaire ; Avril 1996 ; Tchernobyl : le vrai, le faux et l’incertain

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Society); Adam Ferguson , An Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767)

scientific community and not yet the ordinary citizen. Governments are concerned but fail to implement efficient solutions due to well-known reasons like short time objectives, conflicting interests and non-adapted organisations.

### 3.4.10 Challenges

As we shall see later in this paper, I was in fact not able to experiment practically my theories that will therefore remain for some time a theory. The IUCN and I agreed at the beginning of this study to experiment horizontality in the general context described here. After a while and during the study, its management decided to halt the experiment. Coincidentally IUCN hired a new employee in the position of HEAD - INFORMATION MANAGEMENT GROUP. This might be a demonstration that a vertical organisation, when it has to decide of its future, is not prone to accepting changes coming from outside. Quy Nguyen Huy & Henri Mintzberg (HUY, 2003) wrote an interesting article about change management in the organisation that sheds some light on this and other problems too.

### 3.4.11 NGOs as Institutions

The concept of institution plays a role in the identity of an NGO. To convince ourselves, let us first borrow two definitions of this term. Wikipedia<sup>38</sup> has a very good and modern definition: *Institutions are structures and mechanisms of social order and cooperation governing the behaviour of two or more individuals. Institutions are identified with a social purpose and permanence, transcending individual human lives and intentions, and with the making and enforcing of rules governing cooperative human behaviour. (...)*

Merriam-Webster<sup>39</sup> has a wider definition. Both will help us understand our subject:

**3** : something that is *instituted* : as **a** (1) : a significant and persistent element (as a practice, a relationship, an organization) in the life of a culture that centres on a fundamental human need, activity, or value, occupies an enduring and cardinal position within a society, and is usually maintained and stabilized through social regulatory agencies <institution of marriage> <the family is a fundamental social institution> (...) **b** : an established society or corporation : an establishment or foundation especially of a public character <a literary institution> <the Smithsonian Institution> <institutions of higher learning>

An NGO would probably like to be considered an Institution. Accordingly, it will be important, legally exist; it will endeavour to fulfil a specific purpose – normally published – in its society. To some extent, it will try to be accountable of its actions and of the efficiency of its accomplishments and should feel the need to listen to the individual members of the Society.

NGOs, like governments, are subject to different forms of pressure. They are under pressure from both industries and citizens who adopted ICT for their own use and ask that governments eventually join the trend. We deduct from the similarities we observe between governments and important NGOs, both being Institutions, that there is a further need to develop the e-Government and e-Governance of NGOs as well.

<sup>38</sup> « institution » Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution>; accessed 27/02/07

<sup>39</sup> « Institution » Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged. Merriam-Webster, 2002. <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>; accessed 27/02/07

### 3.4.12 ICT, ICT Revolution and change

One could argue that the techniques used for eCommerce are applicable to eNGO and there are examples that demonstrate this. In effect, some NGO turn to eCommerce to raise funds. I must admit that I do not know whether they are successful or not in this endeavour. Despite of this, in the present document, I shall concentrate on the Governance of NGO related to its role in the Society rather than on how it should manage its own resources.

NGOs will not avoid the dramatic effects ICT has on the society, in particular the trend to horizontalize structures. A very recent demonstration of the power of these new Internet based structures was given last Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July, at 7:00 AM as the local customer were eventually able to buy the first release of the last edition of Harry Potter. In less than 12 hours and at no cost, 11'000 German readers gathered and organized to translate, proof read and released that translation (to their own group only for IP<sup>40</sup> rights reasons). It is obvious that an international NGO with members in many countries could highly benefit from this kind of horizontality.

With this kind of example and its multiplication, organisations will eventually change their structures from present verticality to flexible and federated horizontality. It is true however, that vertical organisations, surrounded by other vertical organisations, are resistant to change. A government, despite its (normally) elected members, is one of the strongest existing vertical organisations and, as long as it exists, benefits of many monopolies on its territory. This is obviously how are made States. However, an NGO cannot really compare to government, nor pretend to monopoly, even 'governmental' NGOs. As useful as an NGO appears to a government, it can disappear at any time.

Change will happen eventually. Responsible and sensible NGOs should rapidly envision, accept and do the move to horizontal structures rather than wait and see, endure and eventually be overthrown by change. Governments will not go bankrupt, but businesses will. NGOs are peculiars in the sense that they do not belong to either of these categories, they nevertheless live from donations or contributions and this is without a doubt their Achilles' heel.

In fact horizontal institutions already exist. Think for example about the Wikimedia Foundation. It has many characteristics of an Institution; it should accordingly be vertical. Well, its top manager is an agronomist, young mother of three, who manages a successful international institution with billions of users along with her own family as well. Do we know a single vertical institution able to say so?

### 3.4.13 Accountability

Accountability for an NGO – like for any institution or even any individual – is a matter of governance, defined as *“a mode of governing that is distinct from the hierarchical control model characterizing the interventionist state. Governance is the type of regulation typical of the cooperative State, where State and non-state actors participate in mixed **public private partnership networks**”*<sup>41</sup> or *“the formation of cooperative relationships between gov-*

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<sup>40</sup> IP has become an abbreviation for Intellectual Property

<sup>41</sup> MAYNTZ Renate; 2002; *Common Goods and Governance*; Common Goods: Reinventing European and International Governance 15, 21 ;Adrienne Heritier ed.

ernment, profit-making firms, and non-profit private organizations to fulfil a policy function.<sup>42</sup>” See also (GOLDSMITH, 2004). Of course, governance is more than just a way to manage the inter-relations within a public private partnership arrangement. We shall detail this by reference to a catalogue of the different types of accountability mechanisms identified by Erik B. Bluemel (BLUEMEL, 2007). The references mentioned here come from the cited article.

People find into the Civil Society a playground to express their frustrations towards their national or local government that ordinary democracy fails to resolve. Therefore, they feel the right to obtain a higher degree of accountability from the organisation they join or support. Regrettably, they are seldom satisfied. Accountability mechanisms are usually designed to constrain power, whatever its form. In the Communication Society, it has become one of the essential means for all interconnected actors to exert mutual control.

It has become quite clear that the Civil Society that requests accountability from governments<sup>43</sup> will have at some point to act similarly and eventually to become accountable as well. Moreover, NGOs that pursue altruistic goals have an everlasting crucial need of resources, this especially when developing social programmes in supplement to those stated insufficient as provided by State.

*Levels of internal democratic accountability vary significantly between NGOs<sup>44</sup> but some have argued, “The role of NGOs is not to be representative but to raise awareness<sup>45</sup> ”. However, the vast majority of NGO accountability scholars dealing with this issue evaluate NGO accountability based solely upon their internal controls. Generally, NGO representatives are not elected by their memberships and members typically are passive contributors who do not review or direct the NGOs’ actions. (Bluemel 2007) This is for example the case of Greenpeace. Some NGO, like the IUCN, do not agree and feel responsibility for their members, to the exception of administrative and financial responsibility.*

Concerning external democratic accountability – see Figure 8 – members and, to some extent, supporters and fund raisers are the primary factors of internal NGO accountability, while beneficiaries are viewed as external accountability holders who at all times possess reputation controls, but who may possess greater rights to hold NGOs accountable depending upon the function performed by the organization. Think for example about the situation of fishermen, considering becoming members of an organisation that protects marine biodiversity, with the covert aim of taking control of that association in order to protect their short term interests. Think also about the beneficiaries of a public assistance programme funded by a government but carried out by an NGO in *Public Private Partnership*<sup>46</sup>. As a particular NGO gains influence, it can exert effects, for good or ill, on people that are not its members. At this point, it can be legitimately held externally accountable like other powerful entities that operate in world of politics as lobbies.

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<sup>42</sup> LINDER Stephen H. & VAILLANCOURT ROSENAU Pauline; 2000; *Mapping the Terrain of the Public-Private Policy Partnership*; Public-Private Policy Partnerships 1, 5 ;Pauline Vaillancourt Rosenau ed.

<sup>43</sup> See for example the case of IUCN at paragraph 5.2.1

<sup>44</sup> See CHANDLER David; 2003; *New Rights for the Old? Cosmopolitan Citizenship and the Critique of State Sovereignty*; 51 Pol. Stud. 332, 336.

<sup>45</sup> Id. at 340. See also GALTUNG Johan; 2000; *Alternative Models for Global Democracy*; Global Democracy: Key Debates 143, 155 (Barry Holden ed.).

<sup>46</sup> Public Private Partnership is frequently abbreviated PPP

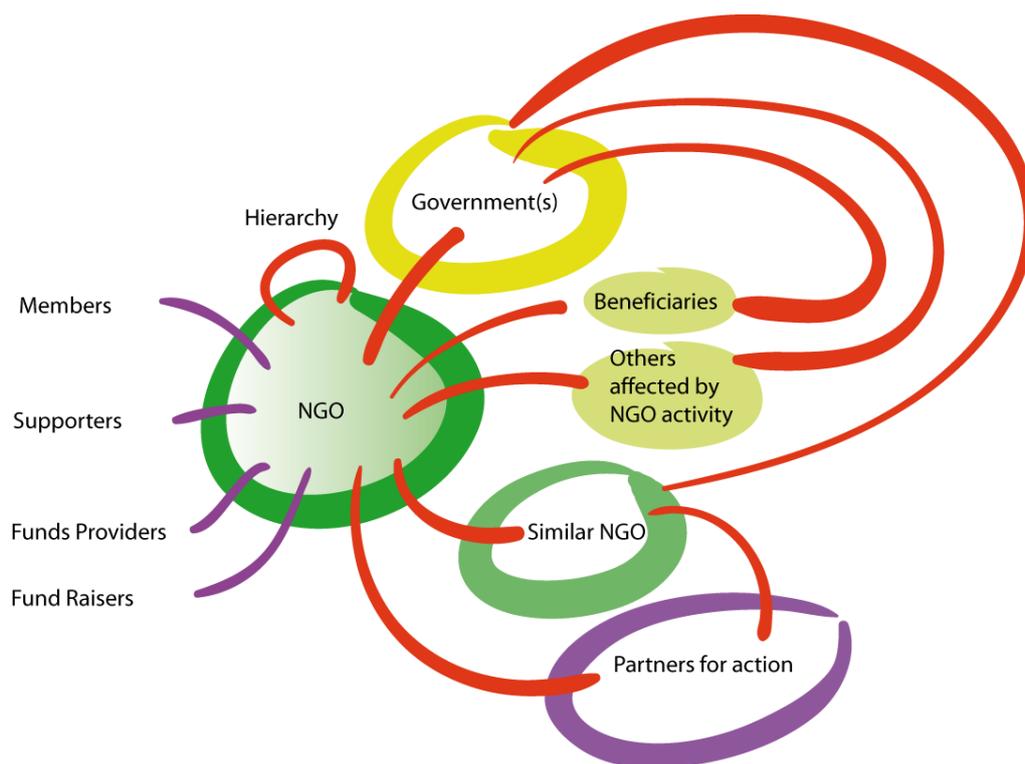


Figure 8 - Relations of accountability

Bluemel identified in his article a catalogue of control mechanisms of accountability based on fiscal, market, supervisory, legal, peer, market, reputation and hierarchy. For details, please refer to a more complete version of this paragraph on my web site<sup>47</sup> or directly to Bluemel (BLUEMEL, 2007).

### 3.4.14 Further interrogations

I assumed that NGOs would provide a good environment to benefit from the value of horizontal organisations facing the changes ICTs incurred in State in general and government in particular. Why is that so? Because NGOs have obviously a narrower spectrum of activity than State, their vertical line of command when it exists is generally shorter, they have competition in their field of activity, the connections to their members, beneficiaries and sponsors is shorter and eventually either they know or they will soon discover that they have to adapt to survive. On the positive side, we have example of successes and though the situation of NGOs is objectively different from that of the private sector, the latter is an objectively valid source of inspiration. E-business gives examples of the power of horizontal organizations that are motivated to survive in a competitive environment and prompt to adopt new trends and technologies. Moreover, vertical structures are too expensive to maintain.

This assumption brings new questions:

- Does a vertical organisation have the necessary and sufficient abilities in itself to change from vertical to horizontal mode?

<sup>47</sup> See <http://jacques.gamboni.org> ; accessed on 24/07/07

- Is my point strong enough to interest an NGO to initiate at least a feasibility study or should it undergo more dramatic stimuli like those provided either by an in-house saboteur (Gorbachev type), an implosion of the structures or an intervention from outside?
- Finally, how disturbing and distracting are the conflicts of interest within a vertical organisation?

Of course, horizontality and monopoly are not compatible. This raise therefore another question: should big NGOs endeavour to keep the monopoly they may have in their arena for example on environment protection or open to more collaborative forms of operation?

In the case of IUCN, being a hyper-vertical organisation, an ‘adhocracy’, in Mintzberg’s terms, it is used to setting the rules. The reaction of IUCN’s management mentioned above at paragraph 2.2.1 is typical of an organisation that holds a monopoly and is willing to keep existing structures in place. The following quote shows that IUCN has no fear of the future and is confident in its ability to continue controlling the evolution:

*“As the Red List is based on peer-reviewed assessments that pass through several levels of review, it is quite different from the process that wikis use, its vertical structure is in fact its strength because the peer review ensures its credibility” and “Wikispecies is in fact very different from the Red List and therefore they are not in competition, they merely provide different types of information. Wikipedia in fact uses IUCN classification schemes for any species in its encyclopaedia and provides a link to the Red List<sup>48</sup>”*

However, Internet-based competitors are at the gate and not simply for watching, as we shall see below at 5.7.2.

### **3.4.15 Synthesis, conclusions for Civil Society, NGOs and the UICN**

Governments hardly consider the Civil Society in their e-Government plans, to the notable exception of PPP projects. Bad communication, bad will and conflicting interests may cause this situation. It is in fact one of the main concerns of our study and naturally it should be the major concern of any Civil Society organisation, and in particular of any NGO. The development of the ICT Revolution will leave the organisations that are unable to adapt to the new paradigm on the side of the road. In addition, the state is visibly not willing to assist the Civil Society to keep on track.

## **3.5 Context of e-Governance**

### **3.5.1 Stakeholders**

E-Governance projects include many stakeholders, among them citizens that may have a chance to participate or to be consulted through political parties or special interest groups. Generally speaking, representatives of the private sector – i.e. any profitable organisation not belonging to the government but not specifically NGO – might as well be considered either as important *clients* in the NPM<sup>49</sup> sense of the term or even as state’s partners in de-

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<sup>48</sup> Julie Griffin IUCN; personal communication

<sup>49</sup> NPM: New Public Management

velopment projects. There are two forms to envision this sort of partnership, either with a purpose of ensuring the general prosperity of the nation or as paid partner of particular projects in PPP.

However, such projects are carried out by and within existing governmental organisations. They are supposed to implement change within the very same organisation, but changing an organisation from the inside is not an easy task. Though it is now widely accepted that a well thought e-Government project requires eventually to conduct changes in the institution, the essence of the government, its accepted or perceived duties, its capacity, its effects are to remain unchanged. Anarchy may be the reward of too much change.

See again Huy & Mintzberg (HUY, 2003) article about the triangle of change in organisations that is fully applicable here also.

*“The dynamic rhythm of organizational change has always been a constant: Dramatic change descends from the top (from senior management), systematic change is generated laterally and organic change emerges from the grass roots. These three forces interact dynamically, each providing the primary, but not sole, thrust for a key transformation process: Dramatic change incites revolution, which provides impetus; systematic change orchestrates reform, which instills order; and organic change nurtures rejuvenation, which spurs initiative.”*

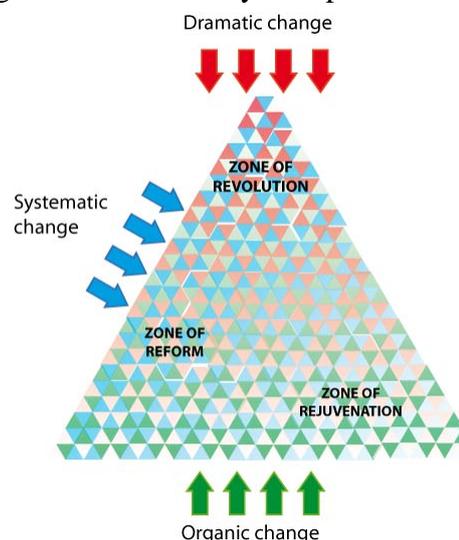


Figure 9 - Huy & Mintzberg Change Triangle

### 3.5.2 Globalisation and Civil Society

The globalisation, the development of an increasingly integrated global economy facilitated by free trade, the free flow of capital and the tapping of cheaper foreign labour markets, as an offspring of Liberalism and Communication, has strong and concrete effects on the Society. It pushes in particular the concept of specialisation of production very far, thus creating interdependency between governmental and private sector. In short, as long as the means of communication (physical transportation of goods, virtual transportation of services) allow it at acceptable costs and delays, goods or services are produced more efficiently in specialized locations rather than dispersed all over the world. However, globalisation has collateral effects in the sense of questioning monopolies and, among them, the role of State notably in the flow of international commerce and eventually giving potentially more power to the private sector and the Civil Society.

On the other hand, Castells (CASTELLS, 1997/2000) reminds that ICT and the globalisation of the economy mutually push themselves forward in a virtuous circle of change. This dual trend to globalisation and informatization had tremendous effects on our societies, therefore on the Civil Society too. Through eGovernance, State pretends to increase citizen participation in governmental affairs, notably by opening consultations in a view of promoting participation in the decision process. Citizens, used to consider the world as their market place, ask for a similar opportunity with regards of their relations with State. Chances of the Civil Society being aware of these projects and capable of answering the expectations of the citizens are tiny. Governments pretend nevertheless that there cannot be good e-Governance at

higher State level without an active participation of the Civil Society. I shall add particularly what has become one of its largest elements, the Non Governmental Organisations.

### 3.6 Context of the e-Civil Society

Both myths of the ‘Information Society’ and the ‘Knowledge Society’ are the obvious bases of the e-Civil Society. We tend to think now that the Information Society covers a wide spectrum, from material (infrastructures) and immaterial (intellectual) means to access information, from content production to distribution, not forgetting the management of this flow of information. Indeed, the value of information depends on its exchange, transformation and usage. This is communication and communication is the essence of networks.

#### 3.6.1 Situation of the Civil Society

Clearly, NGOs linger behind States when considering their e-Status. In effect, despite a thorough search on the Internet, I have never heard of an e-NGO albeit e-Gov is a hot topic nowadays. E-Gov projects talk about e-participation or e-democracy. E-Gov sees its “user” as either the resident or the citizen, but that one is never organised in the view of designers of e-Gov projects. Thus, NGOs never form a part of e-Gov projects.

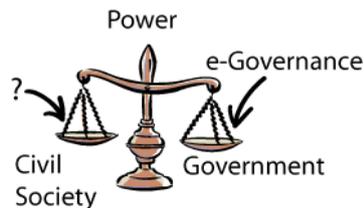


Figure 10 - Balance of power

ICT is about communication. One cannot really study the mutual impact of ICTs on the Society, in particular in order to enhance good governance, i.e. e- Governance, without having a comprehensive understanding of all the meanings of the broad concept of communication.

#### 3.6.2 Transformation of State and its effects on e-NGO

Transformation of State will take time and will heavily depend on local conditions. Consider the huge differences existing between the different forms of government, further influenced by religious, cultural, economic factors to mention but a few. Consider also the differences in motivation to implement e-Government or even more e-Governance initiatives. Here are for example some remarks found in two recent OECD studies about e-Government e-readiness:

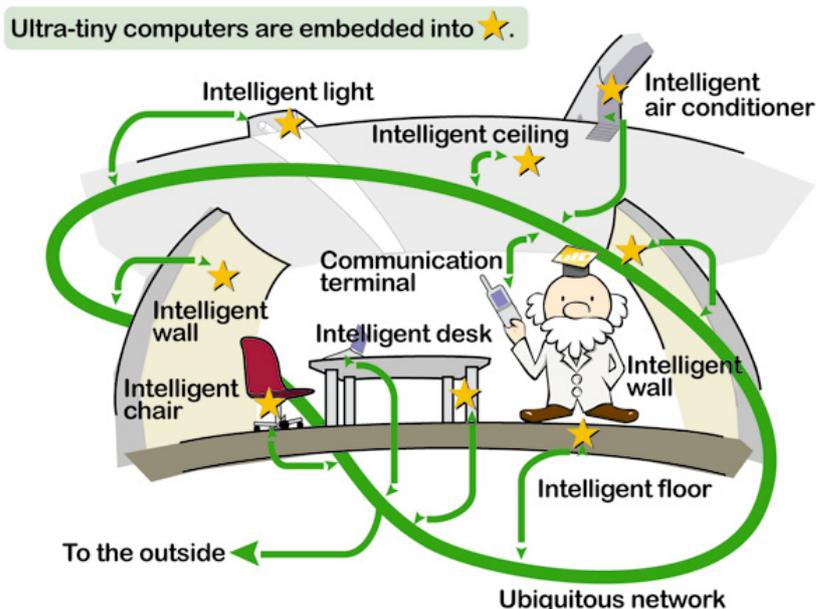
*“The most effective e-government visions depend on input from a variety of stakeholders. Increasingly, users (both citizens and business), nongovernmental organisations, and government employees are being brought into the process of defining an e-government vision. This serves to ensure ownership of an e- government vision and to make sure that it can be translated into realistic action plans.”<sup>50</sup>*

This inclination to place NGOs in a passive mode with regard to their influence on society is not surprising. For the OECD, the NGOs are among the stakeholders of e-Government. This is good, but still the best role in which governments accept them is that of supporter and auxiliary. One expects that the NGO, as one of these stakeholders, will work to enhance the State's efficiency.

<sup>50</sup> OECD; 2003; *The eGovernment Imperative*; OECD Publication Services

### 3.6.3 The Ubiquitous Society thanks to Pervasive Computing

At this point, I need to open a parenthesis about the 'Ubiquitous Society'. This new form of development of e-Governance is very worrying. The Ubiquitous Society benefits from 'Pervasive Computing'<sup>51</sup> to change the way networks interact with the end users, the individual. Today, in the Pre-Ubiquitous age, the act of connecting to the network is based on the free will of the user. In effect, the network – Internet – is available and remains still and quiet



until one decides to connect actively to obtain or acquire services. It is true and largely discussed that the act of connecting expose the user to passive unwanted connections with sometimes harmful effects – like viruses, theft of identity, privacy violations – but the risk is exposed and a responsible and well informed user of such networks should be aware of that and dispose of means to

Figure 11 - ITU's vision of the Ubiquitous Society

respond to the threats. Sometimes it has positive aspects in the sense of networks pushing desirable information on the screen or software update to the computer while the user is busy with his initial request. In the present internet age, the network waits for the user to connect and not the opposite. In fact, the user is neither personally nor physically connected; it is rather his home or office computer or a portable multimedia device that offer connectivity and potential access. The Ubiquitous Society<sup>52</sup> intends to reverse the act of connect-

<sup>51</sup> Tiny microtransmitters (RFID) and microprocessors, embedded in everyday objects, one interacting with the others via Internet and adapting to their surroundings without human intervention form the core of pervasive computing. Privacy becomes a clear issue in the debate on these new technologies that possess a real potential to trigger a new paradigm shift in the way we think our society.

<sup>52</sup> "My name is Mirai, and I am here at NEC today to learn about the ubiquitous society. What does ubiquitous society mean?" NEC Engineer: "It means every information device will be connected, and you'll be able to enjoy lots of new and convenient services." Mirai eating an orange: "It's delicious!" ... You can connect to anyone you want to talk to, anywhere in the world! Isn't that great? — In the coming ubiquitous society, RFID tags attached to products like this orange will communicate with mobile phones to provide detailed product information, such as the place of origin. These RFID systems are already being used in libraries for automatic check-out, returns, and stock management. Other RFID systems are also being developed for the management of bicycle parking lots and other applications. NEC is also considering new products like mobile phones that can be shaped to fit comfortably on the user's arm." Mirai: "Wow, there are so many new ideas!" — Information devices will be safely connected, anytime and anywhere, and will provide us with the information we need, wherever we are. That's the ubiquitous society. Mirai & The Engineer: "Let's open the door to the

ing. In reality, in the perfect appreciation of the Ubiquitous Society, thanks to pervasive computing, the individual is no longer a user in the traditional sense as he is connected to the network permanently and purely passively. He has turned an e-Citizen. Of course, the user keeps the choice of connecting to receive additional services, but he will do that only when, thanks to the 'Intelligent Network', his needs are satisfied even before he hardly needs to express them. As long as the State effectively controls and manages that kind of network, ensures its safety and security, with good and accepted e-Governance, it may have some beneficial results. However, a Ubiquitous Society is not compatible with open and horizontal networks. At this point, Ubiquitous Society will require a strong control over infrastructures that could promote a return to the age of telecommunication networks monopoly. Korea and Japan have achieved notable success with e-Government and e-Governance plans. The government of these countries, but already imitated by those of Estonia and Finland, without visible reaction of the civil society, now strongly push forward the development of the Ubiquitous Society as a next step of development of an ICT based society. Will the Civil Society further accommodate to the Ubiquitous Society? Probably yes, but see below what are the possible consequences of this sort of change.

### 3.6.4 Reflections on a Perfect World

*This Perfect Day* by Ira Levin (LEVIN, 1970), is a science fiction novel. Despite its literary genre, it perfectly finds its place in the reflection we have to conduct on the impacts of ICTs and especially the Ubiquitous Society on the Society, the Civil Society and eventually on the individual himself. When you read today this excellent novel, written 37 years ago, you will certainly be amazed when considering how the gap that existed in 1969 between the real world and the "perfect" world created out of the imagination of the author retracted to what it is today: a very thin crack. In his novel, Ira LEVIN describes an ideal and global society where people's own lives, services provided, transportation, energy, manufacturing, learning and each and every human activity are managed through a global network and by a unique supercomputer located in Switzerland. Of course, in this perfect world, there is no need for money and for a finance system. Everybody wears from birth to death a bracelet that uniquely identifies him as well as it ensures that he gets access to what the computer decides is good for him. Every aspect of people's lives is fully taken in charge by the computer, from conception to death. Citizens eat and drink the same perfect and unique food every day, their health is permanently monitored and they receive periodical "treatments" that ensure that they keep a positive state of mind towards the system and their brothers and sisters. Work place, individual transportation, housing, everything, even the climate, is perfectly and efficiently managed. A perfect "Ubiquitous Society" though the label did not appear in the

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future you can change!" — Small personal payments, services that combine broadcasting and communications, company logistics, tax payments, immigration procedures and other e-government processes... networks play an important role in every aspect of society. Even now, communication networks all over the world are being replaced with new networks to support the ubiquitous society. Mirai: "The ubiquitous society will be really convenient, but is our personal information safe?" — NEC has been developing biometric authentication for years, and has the world's leading technologies. Biometric authentication technologies identify individuals based on unique physical characteristics or behaviour. You don't need to remember a password, or carry a card. You just have to touch the screen or look at the camera, and it will recognize you immediately. Biometric technologies are gradually being adopted at immigration counters, to speed up immigration processes and increase accuracy. e-passport systems are already being used in Thailand, Singapore, and other countries. NEC is also researching new technologies for Internet shopping, which will allow users to identify themselves using a new encryption technology, so they don't have to give the store their credit card number or other personal information. Mirai: "NEC is protecting us, so even when it's convenient, it's still safe." Extracts from NEC's web site; [http://www2.nec.co.jp/online-tv/en/future/ubiquitous/whatdose\\_1.html](http://www2.nec.co.jp/online-tv/en/future/ubiquitous/whatdose_1.html) ; accessed on 13.06.07

novel. There are of course unsuspected drawbacks like the absence of democracy, but as a matter of fact, what is the need for democracy in a perfect world that do not even needs a State to take care of problems? The ideal world as described in the novel was supposed to happen 170 years after the “Unification” under computer control. I can only suppose that Ira Levin thought that Unification would not happen before 2050, therefore placing this Ubiquitous Society in around 2220. Does it still sound correct to a reader of 2007?

We can think and learn a lot from the reading of this novel. A perfect world is the result of extremely efficient ICT based governance that, eventually, will replace the individual in the centre of reflection, but not too soon. In effect, to start with, concerned governments have to comply to a list of perquisites, like a massively global and unique — Internet like — communication network, a powerful computer system, software and data processing architectures able to process huge amount of data, trained personal and educated people to mention

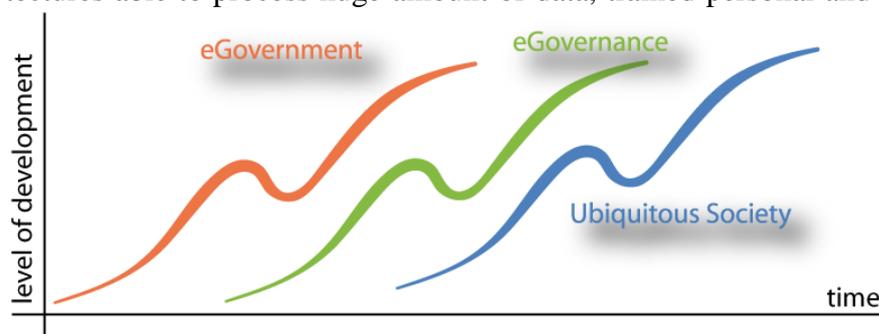


Figure 12 - Rhythm of change

but a few. Moreover, those governments will have to make sure that no Civil Society stays in the way to provoke disturbance. Finally, governments will need to merge before disappearing, at least become invisible in front

of the citizens. In effect, why would you need a government when all your needs are satisfied? As you will learn from the reading of the novel, there remains a hidden world government literally sitting and living on top of the Computer, but this is another story.

How far are we from this perfect world? 200 years away? As we observe from the Korean and Japanese and soon the Estonian and Finnish experience, once they have achieved a fair level of e-Government and e-Governance, governments wonder what to do next. So far, the similar answer that came in these advanced countries was ‘Ubiquitous Society’. This is indeed a challenge to the Civil Society.

### 3.6.5 The example of horizontal structures

E-Government is ICT based; however, is it really a product of the unique ICT entity or rather a combination of IT and CT in the sense that it keeps its centric perspective on things?

ICT sounds like a conjunction of IT and CT. However, for decades, these two technologies progressed separately. They emerged in vertical and hierarchical industries: you located a computing or data centre at your headquarters, you operated them by high rank well paid specialists, directly reporting to the top management; telecom networks, despite their networked nature, were equally based on central offices and with no exception used star topology. With very few exceptions, telecom operators were either State owned or benefited from monopolies on their territory. Specialists also reported to government officials or were civil servants. With the convergence of technologies and demonopolization, the context changed dramatically. Today, the physical ICT networks are becoming more and more horizontal. The aim is to place the user at the centre of the network.

Of course, physical networks are not social networks and we have to keep this in mind. However, I assume that thanks to the convergence of technologies, fully combined, integrated and deployed ICT networks carry the germ of horizontality and might influence by the example social networks, despite their much higher complexity.

Convergent networks of the future are capable of using different types of open topologies. The beauty of such networks reposes on flexibility, an absence of hierarchy, and the fact that each node of such network is effectively at its centre. This sounds familiar now.



Figure 13 - Self-managed horizontal sensor network

### **3.7 The problem of governing Civil Society without hierarchy**

A recurrent problem arises in discussions about e-Governance. It is a problem of governance in horizontal or networked structures. Hierarchies traditionally address this problem, but it is obvious that one cannot really build a hierarchy in true horizontal networks. In addition, the same problem affects naturally social networks.

The network is supposed to link entities that inter-relate by sharing common interests, common competencies or at least common goals. The network is also a place of interrelations and some times of conflicts. They eventually form groups just for the time they interrelate. The EU for example launched a programme to address this issue of managing a group without hierarchy, the Open Method of Coordination<sup>53</sup>. Obviously, such organisation lacks the means to agree on what they have in common, what they should do to reach their goals, coordinate action and settle disputes.

The federal model is a very interesting and reliable means of managing a group where hierarchy is difficult to arrange.

#### **3.7.1 In the context of the Civil Society**

We know that the different entities that form the civil society are very difficult to classify. In effect, their sizes differ considerably, their abilities and objectives are different, their organisation and purpose vary and they eventually differ in how the population perceive them.

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<sup>53</sup> The Open Method of Coordination - Five Main Elements: 1. Agreeing common objectives for the Union - 2. Establishing common indicators as a means of comparing best practice and measuring progress - 3. Translating the EU objectives into national/regional policies on the basis of National Reports on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion - 4. Publishing reports analysing and assessing the National Reports - 5. Establishing a Community Action Programme to promote policy cooperation and transnational exchange of learning and good practice.

However, they all have at least one thing in common that we shall use in our reflection: they are constituted of groups of individuals.

### **3.7.2 Good governance**

*Good governance* is the way people organise a society - another group - where executives endeavour to govern members of their group with the objective that, in good faith and in full knowledge of the procedures and the processes, the latter agree with the way they are governed. *E-Governance* does presuppose that it applies good governance of the Society with the use and help of ICT. As we have seen here, in this case, the essential notion of Good appears in the discussion. It will consequently play an important role in our reflection.

## **3.8 The assistance of social sciences**

### **3.8.1 Social sciences**

Of course social sciences offer many domains of research and knowledge, the study of group process is only one of those, therefore we shall try to assess correctly the importance of social psychology. Organisations exist for a long time and answer to a whole range of motivations. They are however static entities that new forms of Internet based horizontality challenge. That is in fact my motivation to have nevertheless a closer look at social psychology.

### **3.8.2 Individual behaviour**

Two main concepts arise from our reflection: Groups and Good. Good is a value judgment not only in our case of the manners of the government but also of the individuals. In effect, good governance brings forward a new social contract between State and the citizen. As electronic governance tends to bring government and citizens closer one another, good faith and control of behaviour become more important in this context. This draws us deeper into the basis of individual behaviour in a group. In effect, we think that one cannot really understand and evaluate correctly the contextual environment and ‘business risks’ of any eGovernance project without taking into consideration different important aspects. They are on one hand the behaviour of subjects and their leaders and, as the whole context of eGovernance is surrounded by organised human groups, group processes or social psychology.

### **3.8.3 Social psychology**

As we try to define the civil society outside its forms of organisation, it becomes evident that we need to understand this fundamental element of the civil society - the group – extensively and in its reality. I based my own learning of social psychology on an excellent book, edited for the second time in 2000 and written by Rupert Brown (BROWN, 2000), who is presently professor of social psychology at the University of Sussex (UK).

The group, according to Brown, has the following definition: “The simpler and more comprehensive definition adopted here is two or more people possessing a common social identification and whose existence as a group is recognized by a third party”. This definition would perfectly apply to NGO. Compare it with the confusion of definitions evoked above.

“People's lives are inescapably bound with the groups to which they belong. Whether at home, work or play, human beings are essentially group beings. Thus, an understanding of behaviour in group settings is a central task for social psychology. As I introduced the prac-

tice above, I invite the interested reader to visit my web site<sup>54</sup> to know more about Group processes.

Naturally, Brown, and visibly all his fellow researchers referenced in his book, and there are more than 500 of them, ignore ICT or Internet based groups. Nevertheless, all this study material will be absolutely invaluable in thinking about e-Governance of the Civil Society and, once more, will allow us to think not only from an ICT perspective, but from much more from the very basis of human behaviour's perspective.

At paragraph 3.4.4 above, we questioned the troubled relations between governments and the civil society. Brown has a clear view about this and we share it. He says that governments are afraid of groups and promotes individualism in all its forms. Groups have bad press. However, we have to admit that groups are an inescapable part of human existence. Like them or not, they simply are not going to go away. People grow up in groups, sometimes called families. They work in groups, as engine crews, design teams or hunting parties; they learn in groups; they play in groups, in a multitude of team games; they make decisions in groups, whether these be government committees, village councils or courtroom juries. Many of today's most pressing social problems involve groups of various kinds.

### **3.8.4 Three recurring themes that will affect the Communication of the NGO**

The first is the idea that groups are a source of social identity for people. When an NGO will seek to get the voluntary cooperation of individuals over the Internet, it will have to master this theme.

The second theme is the distinction between task and socio-emotional orientations that have to do with task performance and the achievement of group goals. People in groups are basically concerned with achieving some task; to do this successfully they need to be sensitive to other group members' needs and motives. This links us to themes like leadership, social influence and group productivity. This reflection will also intervene in our understanding of new forms of horizontal and federated organisations where competition for scarce resources is at stake.

Finally, the third theme is about the importance of social comparison processes. Other people serve as vital reference points for the evaluation of our abilities and the validation of our opinions.

Now suppose you have your ideas, sufficient motivation and energy and decide to create an NGO. You will need resources and in order to get them, you will need not only a concrete project but also members. Ask yourself the question: What are the factors that will govern the choice of an individual to seek out an association like yours and to motivate him to attempt to join you voluntarily? Levine and Moreland (LEVINE, 1994) suggest one answer: people look to join groups that will be maximally rewarding to them and minimally costly. This reminds instantly the modern theory of organisations and confirms my point that Man is really at the basement of any sociological construction. This proposition stems from an old idea in social psychology, social exchange theory, which broadly conceives of people's social relations in terms of profit maximization, where investments and outcomes can take psychological as well as material forms.

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<sup>54</sup> See <http://jacques.gamboni.org> ; accessed on 24/07/07



nodes. The concept of communication incarnates in a very wide concept. The telecommunication industry has an accurate but limited view of communication.

It was not the scope of this Master Thesis to develop a full concept of Communication, but because it is so central to our subject, as are Group Process, I decided to find a good source of reference. I found it by Erik Neveu (NEVEU, 2006), a French researcher and professor of social sciences in France. He proposed, in a book he wrote in 2006, an excellent synthesis of the present research and an introduction to the “Society of Communication”. Neveu considers the term “Communication Society” a worthy challenger for the well known “Information Society” and uses alternatively both terms with the same definition. We have to be aware of this confusion, as it is frequent among social scientists that have a very different understanding of networks as engineers do. Before however turning to Neveu, let us have an overlook on the general context of e-Governance and its possible effects on the development of e-NGOs.

### **3.10 Further work on communication**

The communication processes in Society will change with a different governance of State. In addition, looking back at Figure 14 above, one will discover the difficulty I had in determining the position of NGOs in that figure. The associations that provide services to certain groups of the population will want to communicate the result of their action essentially to gain further financial support but probably also to enlarge the number of their beneficiaries, acting in this context rather like the business sector. On another hand, associations that pursue political objectives will want to communicate to make their voice heard in the political arena, thus acting like political parties or pressure groups. Quite naturally, they will also want to communicate to acquire new members in order to widen and heighten their legitimacy with respect to the government and of course in order to improve or at least maintain their financial situation.

In the present Communication Society, these associations have to communicate in order to exist, like any institution or individual. However, in a Ubiquitous Society, in a society that benefits from the full range of services provided by the electronic governance, some of the links or even elements of networks presented in Figure 14 will become redundant with the existing obvious and non-obvious links that we try to demonstrate hereunder.

New channels of communication will appear as constituent of e-Governance as e-Governance and eDemocracy are children of the same project.

#### **3.10.1 Channels of the Ubiquitous Society**

The perspective on Communication will change similarly in the Ubiquitous Society. Depending on your situation in the system, communication will be either an active or a passive instrument. It is not clear how, precisely, the new paradigms of e-Governance evolving toward Ubiquitous Society will influence this. The active use of political communication is the core business of any association that plays a role in the formation of public opinion. The passive use of political channels of information is equally important as it functions like a feedback loop in the process of opinion formation. Again, e-Governance will shorten the links between government and citizens, thus depriving political NGOs from an essential part of their processes. Ubiquitous Society will eventually shorten these links to its lower limit.

### 3.10.2 Balance between freedom and innovation

Specialists say that the *ontogenesis*<sup>55</sup> of State changes the balance between individual freedom and the individual benefits of belonging to a group. We see the development of e-Governance as this continuing effort to increase the complexity of the body of State. This has a cost in term of creativity. Many e-Governance projects advertise the advent of knowledge society as a benefit of better use of ICTs by the government. I still do not see how an increase of creativity of the government will induce a similar situation in the private sector or in the Civil Society. On the opposite, individuals, thanks to a creative use of ICTs were able to develop very new social forms like:

- Virtual communities<sup>56</sup>
- Collaborative spaces<sup>57</sup>
- Creative Commons<sup>58</sup>
- Virtual Societies (2<sup>nd</sup> Life)
- Wikis

This is simply to mention the most evident forms of what is called nowadays *Web 2.0* applications of the Internet.

In order to have a better understanding of the role of Communication in a broad sense, in common e-Governance projects as well as in e-NGOs projects, we shall turn once again to the social scientists. Sociology provides in effect engineers and ICT specialists with another point of view on the Information Society.

### 3.11 Notes and comments on the book of Erik Neveu

In his book, written in French, Neveu (NEVEU, 2006) studies the society in the light of the communication between the population and governments. His approach differs from that of Manuel Castells as he observes the *communication* as an element in itself and its implication in the relationship between citizen and state. Accordingly, for Neveu, the Civil Society is probably a by-product of the communication society and as such has only a role of spectator in the 'play' organised by the State. Naturally, he is taking the Civil Society at its final stage

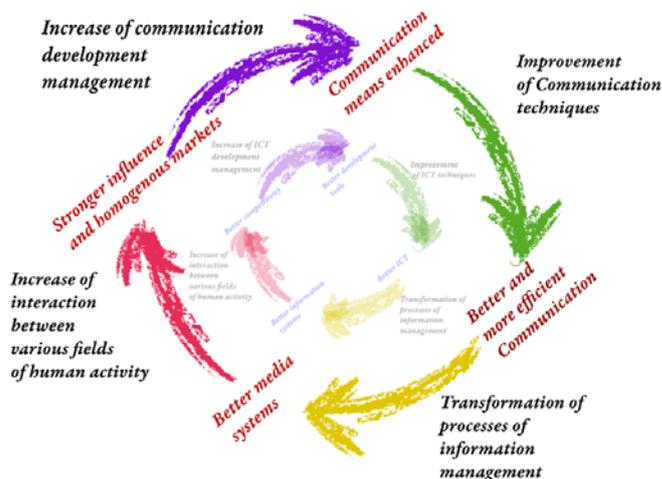


Figure 15 - Virtuous circle of Communication

<sup>55</sup> The process of an individual organism growing organically; a purely biological unfolding of events involved in an organism changing gradually from a simple to a more complex level

<sup>56</sup> See for example <http://www.rheingold.com/vc/book/intro.html>; accessed 13/06/2007

<sup>57</sup> For example, see [http://www.eduprojects.net/sig1/collaborative\\_space.html](http://www.eduprojects.net/sig1/collaborative_space.html); accessed 13/06/2007

<sup>58</sup> See <http://creativecommons.org/>; accessed 13/06/2007

of development, the seventh one described above at paragraph 3.1.2. We just mentioned above that the “Knowledge Society” was an important element of e-Governance. State officials explain the knowledge society in terms of country development and progress of the society. We shall see that Neveu has a different point of view on the subject.

We shall also see, when analyzing in paragraph 3.16 another practical work, that of Marie-Gabrielle SURAUD (2005), that the functioning of the Civil Society is already influenced by the means of communication. The ability of NGO leaders in mastering communications will have an impact on the prosperity of their organisations. There is a real similarity between the mutual impact of ICT and Society development that was so well described by Castells and the Communication means and the Society. We even see a link between these twin virtuous circles.

### *3.11.1.1 The myth of the Communication Society*

Neveu seeks out to deconstruct the “myth” of the Communication Society and invites fellow sociologists to answer to these three questions:

- What does the concept of “Communication Society” or “Information Society” reveal?
- How did this concept grow to become so visible?
- What links evolutions of the social relations and the new social representation of the Communication Society?

The answer to these questions figure in his book (in French) and a synthesis along with relations to the subject of the thesis is available in the web site I already mentioned here<sup>59</sup>.

### **3.11.2 The role of State**

Zbigniew Brzezinski<sup>60</sup> demonstrated in 1970 that there was in the United States a better understanding of the situation and of the concepts of the Communication Society. There was a need, according to him, to increase the global performance of the ‘collective intelligence’, as it was a key to power.

Considering the role of State in the development of the communication Society, the examples of Korea and Japan are of extreme value. We can see now, as evident results are achieved in term of eGovernance status and in term of development of a national ICT industry, what achievements result of the efforts of a voluntary government aware of the powers of the communication society.

### **3.11.3 Digital Divide**

It is quite common, nowadays, to talk about the digital divide. Dozens of studies<sup>61</sup> have shown, from the international to the local levels, the persistence of strong differences of resources, of communication competencies and of the ability to use simply the communication

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<sup>59</sup> See <http://jacques.gamboni.org> ; accessed on 24/07/07

<sup>60</sup> Z. Brzezinski, *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era*, New York, 1970

<sup>61</sup> See for instance those web sites: <http://www.digitaldivide.org> ; <http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org/>

devices. Neveu sends us for an example, to a study of Marie-Gabrielle Surraud (SURAUD, 2005) made in a research workshop of the international networks of NGOs. We shall come back to this study as it shed a desperate light on e-Civil Society that we have to address.

#### **3.11.4 Towards e-democracy?**

E-Democracy is intended to allow direct participative democracy, but of course, it is raised against a possible confiscation of the power by the political representatives. Direct democracy raises also several problems related to the communication and manipulation of information. Opinion polls bring us very good examples regarding communication: one needs in effect the amplifier of media and publicity to push opinion polls from the status of investigation technique to that of producer of the ‘public opinion’.

#### **3.11.5 A Society of autonomous and interactive<sup>62</sup> actors**

Autonomy is initially the promise of a decentralised society. A dream to Civil Society, it is brought through better ICTs:

- User-friendliness and permanence of opinion polls,
- Interactivity with the government,
- Transparency of acts and decisions,
- Knowledge acquisition for all,
- Accountability of those in power.

#### **3.11.6 Status of conflict in the model of a communication society**

What can be the status, the *raison d'être* of the policy in a convivial society where social strains reabsorb peacefully? Find the answer in the Perfect World. According to Pr. Matthias Finger, the trends to individualisation in the society brings along the decline of the power of State. This is an illustration of the problem.

#### **3.11.7 Communication agents**

Neveu sees that heavy tendencies and modifications of the forms of the society, as an effect of the communication society, also affect the positions that individuals hold in society. This includes recruitment and professional trajectories and leads to the occupation of responsibility jobs. Finally, this phenomenon is itself correlated with a heavy tendency marked by the increase in the levels of schooling, which alters the nature, and the volume of the cultural capital held by the occupants of very varied social positions. We would thus rather talk about a ‘knowledge society’, instead of a ‘communication society’ (Stehr, 1994), of a society of high fragmentation of work. The same term of knowledge society thus covers very different aspects whether it relates to the increased efficiency of the private sector or the increased efficiency of individuals relative to their degree of ‘adequacy’ with the Information Society. In the private sector, a knowledge society is a society that learnt that knowledge is the principal source of wealth. Knowledge brings

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<sup>62</sup> Corresponds to horizontality in my opinion

along ‘distinctive advantages’ in a competing globalised world. Knowledge, applied to tasks and enterprises we already know how to do, enhances productivity and knowledge applied to processes or accomplishments we do not know yet, brings creativity. The three concepts of knowledge, productivity and creativity are intimately linked.

#### *3.11.7.1 Division of work, coordination, reflexivity*

Neveu: *The organic model of solidarity supposes a work of coordination, of synchronisation of the social segments, functions filled by differentiated and institutionalised social fields, work assured essentially by the State.* The State thus collides with the Civil Society. The functions of coordination and regulation flow through means that concern today the Communication Society.

### **3.12 The role of State in Communication**

#### **3.12.1 The State is an institution of centralization and treatment of information<sup>63</sup>**

Neveu: *The State must hold the monopoly of legitimate violence; this requirement ineluctably leads it to undertake actions relating to the control of the technical and physical tools of communication.* Neveu draws a logical conclusion from his analysis of the communication society, but a conclusion that is in direct opposition with the facts. We know in effect that demonopolization – a clear release of State’s control over an essential tool of communication – was the key ingredient to permit the deployment of Internet thanks to many Internet Service Providers that took the risk to compete against the incumbent. State will rather ensure the control over the flow of information; the content replaced the transmission media as a target of State’s control. This brings us to consider the difference of appreciation of State’s control according to the different types of media used: for example, in most countries, the distribution of television channels is ruled in very different manners. Rules differ for radio transmissions using analogical signals, digital signals, satellite transmission or cable transmission and usually do not exist for television signals that use the most recent techniques like TV over IP or Internet television. State has the same trouble while attempting to regulate information technologies just for the same reason as it cannot rule the most recent technical development of transmission technologies. The convergence of networks to a single one will even render its attempts to regulate the means of communication more and more pathetic. Eventually, the governments, which might have achieved a certain ‘level of success’ in this sort of control, would strongly harm the competitiveness of their national economy as we saw above. The globalised economy cannot accommodate this need of State to control communication. On another hand, State is constituted as a machine to centralise information, which is useful for the holders of the power.

#### *3.12.1.1 Construction of State and birth of statistical science*

The mutual process of construction of a statistical knowledge by the State and of construction of the State thanks to the knowledge that the statistics provide also goes through the standardisation of the techniques of collection of information that State needs and of harmonization of the communication media and information exchange in the society. Therefore, processes are systematically formulated and guided by a rise of the statistical knowl-

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<sup>63</sup> Mr. Zhou Hongren shares this point of view

edge that always ends up becoming an official knowledge, produced by and for the administrations with an end to control and manage the society.

Any NGO in that respect needs to know how to integrate its eNGO initiative in this process in order to take part in it and draw benefits of that knowledge. In effect, governments recognize that most NGOs possess the particular characteristic, thanks to their unique and trusted proximity with the terrain, which is the power to gather unique and valuable information. This constitutes a real and valuable asset and too few NGOs are aware of this. Crudely said, probably the only real assets an NGO that usually do not act for profit possess are trusted information. They should add value on this raw material. Social NGOs think their value resides in the services they provide to the population, but services are a commodity that is valued only by the beneficiaries.

### 3.13 Roles of State in the Communication Society

#### 3.13.1 State acting as a 'cleaning filter' of the public opinion

The role of the State is also *'to introduce reflexion into the social life'* and to pursue a quest of a *'rational deliberation'* in the political arena, to promote a *'Comparative Appreciation'* of the arguments. State builds social rules and regulations. In a democracy, the projects of laws or acts are to be subjected to preliminary deliberations; therefore, the State renders visible the diversity of the points of view and of the interests related to the social fragmentation. The press, the mass media plays a crucial role as a mediating place of a *'mutual listening'* and of *reciprocal revelation between holders of the power of State and components of the social body*. The

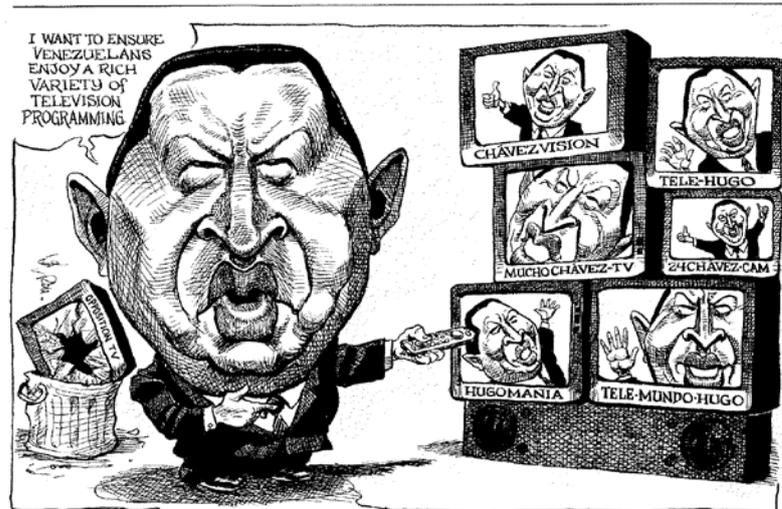


Figure 16 - © The Economist

The mass media and the State are accomplices the processes of identification of a *'public reason'*, it is a functional equivalent to the Stock Exchange for the economic market. Eventually, the State, as major owner of information – see again Hongren's declarations in the introduction, – feels the need no longer simply to collect information just for monitoring but now acts for a better synthesis of information and feels invited to determine the forms of the *'public opinion'*.

Neveu: *The liberal State is from now on a pedagogue State.*

The official intervention is regularly rationalised, making an increasingly important place to the solicitation of the assets of science, as well the exact sciences as the social sciences. Public policies are marked by the influence of experts. The sociological knowledge is from now on present in all the operations of the official administrations. **NGO are experts in their fields**, eNGO has therefore a crucial role in its inter-relation with e-Government and fur-

thermore e-Governance. The difference between both approaches is that between a provider of knowledge and a provider of informed indicator of good policies.

### 3.13.2 The sociologist and Pedagogue State

Neveu: *The State got itself the means to exploit a decisive role in the formation of the modes of perception, of the references and of the topics present in the symbolic horizon system of the population. The Communication Society is understandable only by taking into account the incorporation in the daily practises of communication of the assets of social sciences (Nephew & Rieffel, 1991).* That is a good conclusion for a sociologist; it is of course valid for any provider of knowledge the State has no means to gather.

### 3.13.3 The role of Ubiquitous Society in gathering and forming knowledge

A proclaimed goal of the Ubiquitous Society is to provide instant and trustworthy information of the instantaneous condition of the population. Compilations will allow using real time statistical data, a dream to any State official. This vision becoming reality in some countries thanks to extensive e-Government programmes poses a real threat to the model of collaboration between State and knowledge providers. In the Ubiquitous Society, the forming and formatting of the public opinion will benefit from a very short feedback loop, thus reinforcing the power of State. We have a very interesting model of what may come with interactive television. The spectator in a television show is invited to give his or her opinion in order to change the evolution of a particular situation. The compilation of opinion – often only a choice between a few alternatives – is displayed on the television to allow new real-time mutual interaction within the population of spectators. Ubiquitous Society is just a step above with State as the game director.

## 3.14 Neveu's conclusions on Communication Society

*The dispersion and the interactivity of the networks also echo, in a new form, the ideal of multiplicity of the countervailing powers, the development of a civil society able to preserve its autonomy vis-à-vis the State.*

*The figure of the network also requests a homology with that of a rational deliberative space defended by the Lights or the model of the open society, more basically still with that of the "invisible hand" of a transparent market dear to the classical economists.*

*The speech of the Communication Society fits basically in the register of speech of depoliticization as it tends to make conflicts illegitimate, it overvalues the technological determinisms, it sends social faintnesses back to the maladjustments of dominated or with awkwardness's of the power holders.*

## 3.15 Notes on Castells' "The Information Age"

After Brown with Group Processes, Neveu with the Communication Society, Manuel Castells shall be our third guide in this journey in e-Civil Society. In reality, he should have been our first guide, but the work he has done with the assistance of his students for over twelve years of scrutinizing our society with the lens of ICT changes is so vast and so ambitious that the risk of getting involved in too many directions was far too high.

### 3.15.1 The Network Society

In the first volume (CASTELLS, 1996/2000), Castells covers the structural aspects of the 'Information Age' that created the Network Society: new social forms into which core economic activities have been organized around the power of ICTs and new spatial and temporal conditions resulted thereof. At the base of this reorganization is the now well-known pervasive implementation of technological innovation since the 1970s, clustering around the convergence of Information technologies and Communication Technologies. Castells concludes from his research that ICT evolves in a distinctively different pattern than previous technologies, thus constituting the 'informational mode of development': *a flexible, pervasive, integrated and reflexive, rather than additive evolution*. This virtuous circle has created in almost thirty years a new economic environment: *the informational and global economy*. This new economy is informational because the competitiveness of its central actors (firms, regions, or nations) depends on their ability to generate and process electronic information. It is global because its most important aspects, from financing to production, are organized on a global scale, directly through multinational corporations and/or indirectly through networks of associations. The Civil Society is not mentioned as such in his reflection at that level, but naturally, the transposition is easy. We shall see Greenpeace's example later to illustrate this.

This new global economy is more than just another layer of economic activity on top of the existing production process as e-Government is more than an ICT layer on top of administrative processes. Rather, as e-Governance is supposed to do, it restructures all economic activities based on goals and values introduced by the efficient and beneficial use of new technological means of productivity. Rather than creating the same conditions everywhere, the global economy is characterized "*by its interdependence, its asymmetry, its regionalization, the increased diversification within each region, its selective inclusiveness, its exclusionary segmentation, and, as a result of all those features, an extraordinarily variable geometry that tends to dissolve historical, economic geography*".

The global economy results of what Castells calls *the space of flows*: a fully integrated global network. It comprises of several connected elements: all means of access networks (physical networks) and social networks like the financial but also personal networks. *Social organizations reconstitute themselves according to this space of flows*.

In Castells conception, the space of flows is made up of three aspects:

“(Extracts) *The space of flows, as the material form of support of dominant processes and functions in the informational society, can be described by the combination of at least three layers of material supports that, together, constitute the space of flows.*

*The first layer, the first material support of the space of flows, is actually constituted by ICTs that form the material basis for the strategically crucial processes of the network of society. This is indeed a spatial form, just as “the city” or “the region” in the organization of the merchant society or of the industrial society. In this network, no place exists by itself. The technological infrastructure that builds up the network defines the new space, very much like railways defined “economic regions” and “national markets” in the industrial economy; or the boundary-specific, institutional rules of citizenry.*”

The second layer of the space of flows is constituted by its nodes and hubs.

*“The third important layer of the space of flows refers to the spatial organization of the dominant, managerial elites. Societies are asymmetrically organized around the dominant interests specific to each social structure. The fundamental form of domination in our society is based on the organizational capacity of the dominant elite. Articulation of the elites, segmentation and disorganization of the masses seem to be the twin mechanisms of social domination in our societies. Space of power and wealth is projected throughout the world, while people's life and experience is rooted in places, in their culture, in the history.”*

Castells' main argument is that a new form of capitalism has emerged at the end of last century: global, hard-boiled on its objectives and much more flexible than its predecessor. We are interested in the context of e-NGO or e-Civil Society by the fact that, according to Castells, it is challenged around the globe by a multitude of social movements, on behalf of cultural uniqueness. He returns to this point in tome 2 'The Power of Identity'. *“Our societies are increasingly structured around the bipolar opposition of the Net and the self”*. We experience a new society: *“A new society emerges when and if a structural transformation can be observed in the relationships of production, in the relationships of power, and in the relationships of experience”*. A society that forces all its constituents to react and adapt progressively with the constitution of global networks, it becomes more and more difficult to those that do not belong to them to survive. It is thus far better to play a proactive role and attempt to take an active part at their constitution.

### 3.15.2 The Power of Identity (CASTELLS, 1997/2004)

Castells situates the origin of tensions and conflicts that affect our societies at the heart of the ICT Revolution, in the form of a crisis of Identity. I quote him on several aspects that concern the Civil Society:

*“For those social actors excluded from or resisting the individualization of identity attached to life in the global networks of power and wealth, cultural communes of religious, national or territorial foundation seem to provide the main alternative for the construction of meaning in our society. They appear as reactions to prevailing social trends, which are resisted on behalf of autonomous sources of meaning. They are defensive identities. They are culturally constituted.”* Those are probably the causes of the foundation of many NGOs, a need to fight against the adverse effects of globalisation and loss of identity in an interconnected environment. Now ask yourself how these reactive NGO will accept to move to e-NGO. Castells insist:

*“Globalization and informationalization (...) are disfranchising<sup>64</sup> societies. As institutions of state and organizations of civil society are based on culture, history, and geography, the sudden acceleration of the historical tempo, and the abstraction of power in a web of computers, are disintegrating existing mechanisms of social control and political representation. (...) Thus, following an old law of social evolution, resistance confronts domination, empowerment reacts against powerlessness, and alternative projects challenge the logic embedded in the new global order.”*

Castells give interesting example of constructive response to that situation, among them the Zapatistas Revolt in Mexico, a movement born after 50 years of trouble in the Chiapas region of Mexico and organised in 1992: *“The success of the Zapatistas was largely due to*

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<sup>64</sup> Remove the freedom from servitude or restraint in the sense used by Castells

*their communication strategy, to the point that they can be called the first informational guerrilla movement. They created a media event in order to diffuse their message, while desperately trying not to be brought into a bloody war. (...) Autonomous communication was a paramount objective for the Zapatistas. (...) It is interesting to underline that two developments of the 1990s are at the origins of the Zapatistas' use of the Internet: the creation of La Neta, an alternative computer communication network in Mexico and Chiapas; and its use by women's groups (particularly by "De mujer a mujer") to link up Chiapas' NGOs with other Mexican women, as well as with women's networks in the US." Visibly the Subcomandante Marcos and Erik Neveu agree on the power of communication in our globalised society, but not only, as the Zapatistas were even able to use the power of Internet as an organizational tool. This is quite uncommon yet as we shall see with the experience described by Suraud hereunder in chapter 3.16.*

María Elena Martínez Torres, a researcher at the *Center for Latin American Studies*, University of California Berkeley, studied the Zapatistas Movement. Here is what she notes in connection with the use of the new communication technologies:

*"The first 'informational guerrilla' evolved in the Lacandon jungle in an extraordinary transformation that began on the first day of battle. The transition from a conventional guerrilla war to an informational war was possible because informational technologies had already created new spaces of discussion and diffusion of information through electronic networks. The entrance of civil society into these new spaces is changing the nature of social conflict and transforming information, already the most valuable commodity of this era. Information has played a key role in the process of forging a unique movement ever since the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) first arose."*

Castells gives us another excellent example of the power of the Net: *Greenpeace is the world's largest environmental organization, and probably the one that has most popularized global environmental issues, by its media-oriented, non-violent direct action. Founded in Vancouver in 1971, around an anti-nuclear protest off the coast of Alaska, and later headquartered in Amsterdam, it has grown into a transnational, networked organization which, in 1994, had 6 million members worldwide and annual revenues in excess of \$100 million. Greenpeace's historic leader David McTaggart philosophy is, "to get things done." Therefore spends no time for philosophical discussions: key issues must be identified by using knowledge and investigative techniques throughout the planet; specific campaigns must be organized on visible targets; spectacular actions geared toward media attention will follow. (...) They are resolutely internationalists, and see the nation-state as the major obstacle to accomplishing control over currently unfettered, destructive development. Much of the success of the environmental movement comes from the fact that, more than any other social force, it has been able to best adapt to the conditions of communication and mobilization in the new technological paradigm. By creating events that call media attention, environmentalists are able to reach a much broader audience than their direct constituency. Furthermore, the constant presence of environmental themes in the media has lent them legitimacy higher than that of any other cause. Media orientation is obvious in the cases of global environmental activism such as Greenpeace, whose entire logic is geared toward creating events to mobilize public opinion on specific issues in order to put pressure on the powers-that-be. First of all, the non-violent, direct action tactics, which permeated the movement from the early 1970s, provided good reporting material, particularly when news requires fresh images. State officials would cry about the perversion of counter-power organisations using the same means governments are used to enjoying.*

*“Environmentalists have also been at the cutting edge of new communication technologies as organizing and mobilizing tools, particularly in the use of the Internet. World Wide Web sites are rallying points for environmentalists around the world, as, for example, the sites established in 1996 by organizations such as Conservation International and Rainforest Action Network to defend the cause of indigenous people in tropical forests”.*

### **3.16 Marie-Gabrielle SURAUD's experience with AZF**

#### **Le débat électronique : entre agir communicationnel et stratégie militante<sup>65</sup>**

##### **3.16.1 Web based open discussion in a civil society application**

Marie-Gabrielle SURAUD, a researcher at Toulouse (F) University, published in 2005 a very well documented paper (SURAUD, 2005) on a particular form of e-democracy, based on the empirical study of the electronic debates that followed the accident at the AZF chemical factory in Toulouse the 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001.

In her paper, Suraud asks herself mainly two questions: First one: does the Internet prove able to enhance the political public debate? Secondly, what is the impact of Internet on the interface between the civil society and the government? The research of Suraud fits perfectly to the scope of my own research and sheds light on real life experience, as she visibly observed the situation from within the circle of the main actors. This document is accessible on the Internet in French and its reading is rewarding.

In order to promote a better Civil Society and particularly better governance of e-NGOs, I shall analyse here the observations and conclusions of Suraud and propose a new reading of her conclusions. I start with the same observation that Internet, as the first and major expression of ICTs in the social role of an e-NGO, is at first an essential communicating tool. Its role is, on the one hand, to ‘promote the formation of the public opinion and of the political will by transforming the conditions in which the debates or civic expression happen’. On the other hand, I observe that it is a means to transform the interface between this new expression of the will of the civil society and the governments. The development of better deliberative processes in the civil society is therefore the base of the new e-democracy and a more participative approach in the decisions of governments.

*« Forms of organisation and solidarity belonging to the autonomous public sphere – another term for organised civil society – play an essential role from the point of view of the conditions of citizens' participation in the political life. »* Suraud thinks, and I think we all agree, that the civil society has a decisive role to play in the participation of citizens into the life of the city. This is the very base of my thesis, this is what governments engaging in e-Governance say, even if their acts contradict this affirmation, this is what any organisation of the civil society, NGOs including, should say. Effectively, Suraud observes, ‘the way to act that is proper to the civil society, in other words the specific dynamic of autonomous public spheres acting outside of the spheres of institutionalised debates, organised by governments, is often ignored’. Simply said, governments usually ignore how the civil society works.

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<sup>65</sup> The electronic debate: between communicative action and militant strategy

In order to better evaluate the relation between governments and the civil society, Suraud seeks also whether the civil society has the will and the means to allow, through the Internet channels, open debates, oriented towards the formation of a shared and common opinion rather than to open a place for confrontation of pre-existing opinions. The question is not innocent. The communication channels opened by ICTs may be new and powerful; they nevertheless act in a society that, despite its transformation into a communication society for over 70 years now, is still dominated by vertically structured organisations. The experiences drawn from the AZF accident in Toulouse and gathered by Suraud will also allow us to answer or observe some of the problems that affect the development of an e-NGO.

The accident touched a very important area of Toulouse. It left many inhabitants not only injured but also their apartments and belongings devastated and the owner of the factory reluctant to accept his responsibilities and their consequences. Besides, the area was also the site of another chemical plant that was eager to restart its activities as soon as possible. To make the situation even more complicated, several thousands of work places were offered by these chemical plants to the region. Finally, environmentalists were questioning the authorities on their responsibilities with regard to the environment. Thus, in that case, many elements of the civil society are present on the same scene, unions, NGOs, political organisations, unorganised citizens. The situation is a very interesting one from our perspective. I suggest in my thesis that Internet has the power to promote horizontal organisations. We start here with existing vertical organisations, some strongly rooted in history like the unions, some potentially more open to less structured forms like environmental NGOs and some not vertical at all as they are not organised, like individuals, the first victims of the accident that suffered themselves from direct damage. We have however to make the hypothesis – that we shall not be able to verify – that the latter are used to vertical organisation as they still rules almost all aspects of our lives. Let us not forget in effect that our present modern societies tend to remove from the individuals the sense of self-responsibility in favour of a model of society that would take in charge more and more aspects the individuals' lives and decisions. This trend does not favour initiative and is an additional factor that prevents individuals to express in Internet forums.

I suggest that there is no workable horizontal organisation without a form of federative agent. Indeed, as we shall see, the organisation of the Internet based collective action of the civil society, in reaction to the AZF accident, proved problematic until it organised itself after many months of errands.

As its first and main application, the Union published on the Internet a page of information collecting archives of meetings held, documents and declaration produced as well as an agenda of forthcoming meetings. The management of the Union and the effective exchange of information (discussions and decisions) happened during formal and informal meetings. A positive point was nevertheless the important amount of documents published on the web. However, despite a massive diffusion of documents, the electronic discussion was not opened to the public, as it remains only accessible to the members of the committee of the Union. It is worth noting that the public did hesitate to enter into the site, as one would hesitate to enter into an unknown place with insecure rules, perceiving this insecurity. At the end of the day, only constituted organisations did participate. In addition, even in this case, only the most experienced ones were acting.

As witness to this attitude, Suraud notes that in fact only those people, belonging to unions or to political organisations and used to their web site had discussions. She adds that even only a small number of specialists out of this group did in fact have electronic discussions. We have something to learn from this remark:

The Internet still appears as a space reserved for ‘specialists’, a new world that does not open easily to the ordinary people. Again, this brings us back to the discussion on the digital divide. The same phenomenon is visible with e-voting; the countries who have adopted it face very low interest from the public. Why is it so?

The experience described by Suraud gives us a clue. Internet is perceived as an alien world, its rules are secret and the effects of using it difficult to foresee. In effect, how do we explain that people who were directly affected, injured, their belongings destroyed, in other terms directly and highly concerned by the situation, left to tiers, naturally less concerned by the direct problems of the victims, the right to speak, write, and eventually decide on their behalf? The civil society needs the tools and the power in ICTs and Internet to survive in the Information Society and in the Ubiquitous Society. However, it will not be able to use it without first solving this problematic. The solution goes by taking into account the fact that the proposed web site must look familiar, must include guides, self-training devices, teaching rooms, etc. Every step of the development of a discussion web site should keep as its major objective a welcome touch to newcomers. The software industry has learned this recently. Man-machine interfaces (MMI) tend to be user-friendly, intuitive. Some multinational organisations are even trying to define MMI, like the ETSI<sup>66</sup> for example, though this work remains very technical and of course vertical.

### 3.16.2 Effects of digital divide in applications for the civil society

Coming back the AZF case, Suraud observed that the online debate was difficult because of a lack of vision of the designers of the web site. ‘They diffuse *a posteriori* press release. The unionist or political organisations do not conceive internet as a direct support for structuring or pushing the militant action’. These organisations spontaneously use traditional and well-known militant practices. We find exactly the same phenomenon with e-Government where civil servants tend to reproduce paper-based processes with ICTs. Similarly, there is no e-Governance of the civil society.

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<sup>66</sup> Ease of use is a key factor for the commercial success of any telecommunication product or service.

The growing complexity of telecom services and equipment makes this aspect more and more important. Amongst other tasks, TC HF is working on the Man-Machine Interface aspects. Contributions are provided in the following areas: User interfaces for the Internet/ Mobile communications like Universal Personal Telecommunications (UPT)/ Multimedia and Video telephony/ User interfaces for network management/ Numbering, addressing and service codes.; <http://portal.etsi.org/HF/kta/MMI/mmi.asp> ; accessed on 12/04/07

Table 1 Distribution of message type during the period from September to December 2001<sup>67</sup>

Message type	Number	Percentage
Agenda and meeting dates	76	25 %
Interventions on organisation conditions	25	9 %
Information about the victims	35	12 %
Information about the chemical plants zone	119	40 %
Regional debate of 30 <sup>th</sup> November 2001	28	9 %
Dialog between individuals	16	5 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>100 %</b>

Table 2 Distribution of messages relative to the number of senders

Number of senders	Percentage
4 senders (having sent respectively, 13, 22, 39 et 101 messages)	59 %
25 senders (having sent from two to six messages)	28 %
38 senders (having sent only one message each)	13 %
<b>TOTAL : 68 senders</b>	<b>100 %</b>

To make things even worse, there still substantial differences among the users of web based discussion platforms. In addition, to deteriorate further the situation, the type of messages exchanged in that particular case, as Suraud found<sup>2</sup>, are either irrelevant or attempt to present only the opinion of an easy speaking minority. Note that this is a case where the digital divide expresses itself in a new special form. There are those who dare or who know how to speak in public and those who do not. Despite the fact that the Internet use non-verbal forms of expression, visibly this particular behaviour keeps similar. In developed societies, the digital divide is a reflection of the cultural divide; it is a new form of illiteracy. It means of course that in order to correct this situation, solutions used to reduce illiteracy will probably be valid as well to reduce digital illiteracy.

Suraud concludes that the thesis of the unlimited access to web discussions, over spatial, ideological, cultural or organisational barriers does not find any empirical foundation. Therefore, according to her findings, the Internet does not contribute in enlarging the space of public debate.

There is however in her work a very interesting observation that points to the evident need of a moderator or, as I prefer to call it a federator. She observed that despite the low participation, the number of messages forced interested people to spend quite a long time on line in order to attempt to read them. Beside the instances of digital divide expressed above, a new one occurs here: who has the time to access to the large amount of information provided by the Internet, again, despite the access restrictions mentioned above? Ordinary users of the information capacity of the Internet benefit from search engines to help them get a comfortable access. A very similar problem faces the discussion platforms over Internet, but of course without any help. There is no “search engine” in a discussion platform. This brings up the need for a solution that, according to my suggestion, should take the form of a federator responsible of quantitative and qualitative access to the information. The term quantitative refers to the number of relevant messages, in other terms to a means of dispatching information, according to its purpose – organisational, discussion, diffusion of information,

<sup>67</sup> See Table 1 and Table 2, taken from Suraud study 2005

collection of information, etc – and to its aging, thus allowing fast, simple and easy access to the delivery or retrieval of precise information. Qualitative information bears also a great importance. However, this goal is certainly much more difficult to reach. The quality of information is often a question of point of view and precisely the aim of a discussion platform is to reach a joint point of view on the discussed subjects. However, one must be very clear and it was without any surprise observed by Ms Suraud that, in absence of a moderator, the users tend to rely of the writing of a very few number of actors that become thus de facto moderators. Naturally, the self-proclaimed moderators are not what they are supposed to be in that role, first as they were not appointed and second as they have their own personal interest in the matter of discussion and therefore cannot carry the neutrality of mind needed by a federator (or a moderator or an arbitrator, etc). Suppose, on another hand, that no one would rise and pretend to play the moderator. What would then the users of the discussion forum do?

Result is anarchy, energy waste, ending with meaningless and dispersed discussion and no tangible or unreliable results, to mention but a few, as users would be left alone to decide on how to sort out relevant information, where and when to deliver information for example.

As we have seen above, the definition of the precise role of the federator becomes an essential part of the planning of e-NGO taken in the perspective of good open, horizontal e-Governance. Here are some topics we should consider to help us in that task. A first one refers us back to existing vertical organisations. In the case observed by Ms Suraud, unions succeeded in taking over the discussion to their profit. They even concluded from the web experience that it became a hindrance to their action. Existing vertical organisations will tend to prevent the arrival of horizontal structures though they set up tools and structures that are supposed to favour participation of all in order to increase their legitimization vis-à-vis their discussion partners, usually government bodies.

The second point brings us back to the federator. He will have the responsibility to give a meaning to the discussion. The question however is how? In her study, Suraud observed that the users of the Web platform were often unable to understand the messages because they did not hold the keys to understand them.

A further point relates to the needs to refrain the restoration of verticality. In effect, verticality offers well-known structures and, among them, the possibility to channel discussions into closed users group. Those groups are predefined; people designed by the hierarchy chair them and their members know themselves very well. It is of course in full contradiction with the idea of horizontality and open discussions.

Asymmetry of information flow is typical of vertical organisations. It is very easy to consider Internet as a single means to deliver information in order to enhance political or union action, but only in one direction, just like what the unions' committee did. E-Government follows the same line, but e-Governance tries to correct that.

Horizontal organisations, or more precisely the people who are using them, might very well be tempted to revert back to a vertical mode of organisation once they are in power, this in order to reinforce their power. This threat is very serious. In effect, plain old vertical organisations base their reflection and their behaviour on their historical experience. For them making excursions in horizontality will bring new experiences, with possible good results but also with failures. The temptation to go back towards verticality will be understood simply as a return to security.

In opposition, those organisations that would revert from newly created horizontal organisations to verticality would base their reflection and behaviour on their own very recent experience by definition. Their motivation would not be based on experience of verticality but on the good perspective that the potential of power and control brings on those who are in charge of vertical organisations. In these days, there are no doubts that they would do it very efficiently as they previously mastered the power of horizontality. It is precisely what happened in the case observed by Ms Suraud, with an addition.

Two individuals who took some responsibilities in this case got the opportunity to study technical documents and became experts in that domain which brought them a real advantage. They gathered to form an informal committee. They are the two who sent the bulk of e-mails (see Table 2). They did not spare their efforts to be known and they ended out mainly in the role of federator. The strategy they used is exemplar.

### 3.17 Concept of virtual NGO

These raw ideas still need to be organised:

- Organisational changes introduced in enterprises produced tremendous changes.
- NGO are organisations and therefore are prone to benefit – or not – from what we learnt by studying the changes that were for good or for bad.

The very good example of the networked industry should at least motivate the efforts needed to transpose this model to the networked NGO. The Zapatistas used this model with the success that we know. Several multinational NGO, like the IUCN use a similar model with associate or national NGOs.

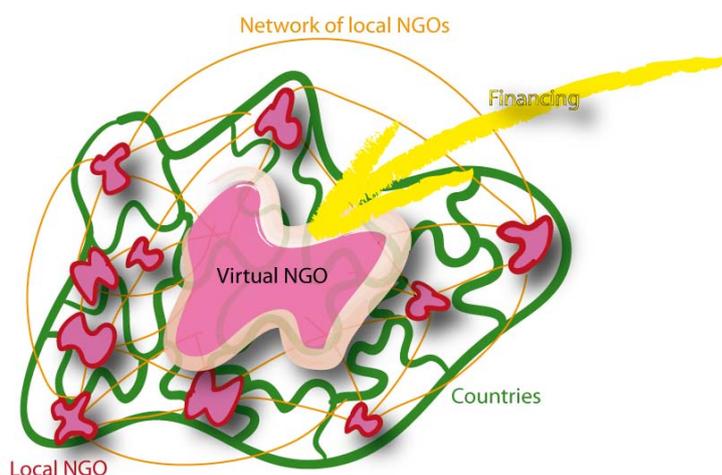


Figure 17- Concept of Virtual NGO

For study purposes, let us imagine an international virtual NGO. Its existence is only allowed for as long as it serves a specific project – that has a beginning and an end – and it covers geographically just as many countries as are covered by this same project.

As a virtual NGO, it should be able to raise as much money as needed by that project. It is managed, as you would lead a federation. It must not be mixed with a federation of local NGOs as this form of organisation lacks one of the major

benefits of a virtual NGO, its ability to disappear as the project is done. A constituted federation is just another form of vertical organisation that, though it may appear to have a networked organisation, still uses permanent links.

See what Castells says about the horizontal organisation in: *The Rise of the Network Society*, chapter "The Network Enterprise"

*About Cisco (...) over 50 percent of the orders placed by customers flow over the Net to Cisco's contractors, who serve them directly. Cisco simply gets the payment. What for? Well, for R&D, technology, design, engineering, information, technical support, and business savvy in building a reliable network of suppliers, and in marketing to customers.*

*Cisco engaged also in strategic alliances with major companies in various areas of business: model of the networking form of organization, it is not an isolated example. It is, rather, a trendsetter.*

*The Cisco model is not confined to the Internet economy, or for that matter to the information technology industry. It diffused rapidly in the 1990s to areas as diverse as agricultural machinery; grocery shopping; automobile production; energy; automobile sales; business consulting services or even higher education. The global networked business model, pioneered by Cisco, seems to have become, at the turn of the century, the predominant model for the most successful competitors in most industries around the world.*

*The new organizational trajectories I have described were not the mechanical consequence of technological change. The most important obstacle in adapting the vertical corporation to the flexibility requirements of the global economy was the rigidity of traditional corporate cultures. Furthermore, at the moment of its massive diffusion, in the 1980s, information technology was supposed to be the magic tool to reform and change the industrial corporation.<sup>68</sup> But its introduction in the absence of fundamental organizational change in fact aggravated the problems of bureaucratization and rigidity. In the 1980s in America, more often than not, new technology was viewed as a labour-saving device and as an opportunity to take control of labour, not as an instrument of organizational change.<sup>69</sup> We still find this way of thinking when studying eGovernment projects. In fact, the first step of any eGovernment project is and remains informatization of existing processes.*

*Thus, organizational change happened, independently of technological change, as a response to the need to cope with a constantly changing operational environment.<sup>70</sup>*

*The ability of small and medium businesses to link up in networks among themselves and with large corporations became dependent on the availability of new technologies, once the networks' horizon (if not their daily operations) became global.<sup>71</sup>*

*Cooperation and networking offer the only possibility of sharing costs, and risks, as well as keeping up with constantly renewed information. Yet networks also act as gatekeepers. Inside the networks, new possibilities are relentlessly created. Outside the networks, survival is increasingly difficult. Under the conditions of fast technological change, networks, not firms, have become the actual operating unit. In other words, through the interaction between organizational crisis and change and new information technologies a new organiza-*

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<sup>68</sup> Harrington (1991); Kotter and Heskett (1992)

<sup>69</sup> Shaiken (1985)

<sup>70</sup> Cohendet and Llerena (1989).

<sup>71</sup> Shapira (1990); Hsing (1996).

*tional form has emerged as characteristic of the informational, global economy: the network enterprise.*

Castells' definition of organization: "a system of means structured around the purpose of achieving specific goals." He adds a second analytical distinction, adapted from Alain Touraine's theory.<sup>72</sup> In a dynamic, evolutionary perspective there is a fundamental difference between two types of organizations: organizations for which the reproduction of their system of means becomes their main organizational goal; and organizations in which goals, and the change of goals, shape and endlessly reshape the structure of means. He calls the first type of organizations bureaucracies and the second type, enterprises.

Based on these conceptual distinctions, Castells proposes what he believes to be a potentially useful definition of the network enterprise: "*that specific form of enterprise whose system of means is constituted by the intersection of segments of autonomous systems of goals*". Thus, the components of the network are both autonomous and dependent vis-à-vis the network, and may be a part of other networks, and therefore of other systems of means aimed at other goals. The performance of a given network will then depend on two fundamental attributes of the network: its connectedness, that is, its structural ability to facilitate noise-free communication between its components; and its consistency, that is, the extent to which there is a sharing of interests between the network's goals and the goals of its components. I shall add another dimension necessary to manage the network, a dimension of creating, nourishing, maintaining and dissolving the network. *Why is the network enterprise the organizational form of the informational, global economy? One easy answer would be predicated on an empiricist approach: it is what has emerged in the formative period of the new economy, and it is what seems to be performing. But it is intellectually more satisfying to understand that this performance seems to be in accordance with the characteristics of the informational economy: the successful organizations are those able to generate knowledge and process information efficiently; to adapt to the variable geometry of the global economy; to be flexible enough to change their means as rapidly as goals change, under the impact of fast cultural, technological, and institutional change; and to innovate, as innovation becomes the key competitive weapon . These characteristics are indeed features of the new economic system we have analyzed in the preceding chapter. In this sense, the network enterprise makes material the culture of the informational, global economy: **it transforms signals into commodities by processing knowledge.***

### 3.18 Conclusion on theory

Looking from bottom-up, Man, in the centre of a web of power and of communication, his behaviour notably determined by group processes, tends to balance between the State, its coercive power, its resistant structures with time on its side on the one hand and the Civil Society on the other hand. The ICT Revolution and the Networks threaten to disturb that balance. In effect, a government that engages in e-Governance and Ubiquitous Society inevitably takes over Civil Society's role of relay and resonance-chamber of citizens concerns and discomfort.

However, the same virtuous circle that enabled e-Government and transformed the interrelations within the Society should also play for e-Civil Society and restore the original role of the Civil Society, give it models to apply and last but not least a motivation to react.

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<sup>72</sup> Touraine (1959)

The NGO, incarnating the Civil Society, has to be and remain this inescapable stakeholder of any e-Governance and globalisation plans. It has to know the forces at stake with Civil Society and to prepare and implement its own e-Governance. This endeavour passes through a clear understanding of the definitions and the context into which it evolves.

Finally yet importantly, keep in mind that communication of information is essential to any NGO.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

One will admit that addressing the whole scope of the e-Governance of NGOs in a single Master Thesis is a project whose ambition goes beyond reasonable. In fact, as I introduced the matter, I decided to leave aside the fields of ICT technologies, economy of projects and legal aspects related to the governance of NGOs to concentrate on the theory that embrace the context and the social environment of NGOs. One of my goals was in effect to demonstrate the reasons why no NGO should avoid the reflexion on its future in the e-World, motivate and assist it to start its own reflection in the case it did not do it yet. The applied methodology should therefore reflect this bias by overweighting the theoretical aspects at the expense of practical observations.

### **4.1 Basis of Methodology**

The theory we read at chapter 3 reflects the methodology. In order to illustrate this let us examine some of the topics and how they became important in the thesis:

#### **4.1.1 Understanding interrelations between State, NGOs and users**

For an NGO, the key to success in achieving good e-governance is clearly in the comprehension of the particular role that, as a concrete part of the civil society, it plays in the society in general and in its sphere of activity in particular. The interfaces and the connections that bind it in a web of inter-relations to the State on one side and to the citizens, members or users, on the other side will keep no secret. In a society that is so deeply transformed by ICTs and the Internet, these changing inter-relations are naturally becoming an essential part of the Communication and Knowledge Society we are building.

#### **4.1.2 ICT automated processes**

For an NGO, there is a great temptation to automate simply existing processes with the help of ICT. The transformation of processes is much more challenging. E-NGO, in the sense of ICT-based governance of an NGO, is not just the transposition of classical good governance into the ICT world; it is more a transformation of NGOs' governance with the help of ICTs in order to achieve better governance. Arguments to motivate additional efforts have to be strong to counterbalance the natural tendency to conform to the same sort of efforts the 'competitors' do.

#### **4.1.3 Accountability challenges**

I fully agree with (BLUEMEL, 2007) that accountability is one of the major challenges that face NGOs concerned about good governance and the benefits it can draw from it. Accountability, like Communication, is a multifaceted coin as we have seen and yet it remains curiously absent from the discussions on e-Governance.

#### **4.1.4 Communication challenges**

It is easy to communicate, or is it not? I guess that all NGOs from mid-size up have a web site where they exhibit their motivations, achievements and at least try to motivate visitors to become members or donors. Obviously, ICT contains 'I' and 'C', which appear to be the two ingredients of communication. We have however learnt that the communication of the

Civil Society has very few in common with the commercial or State's official or unofficial communication. Think at the example of the Zapatistas. I meant therefore Methodology to shed light on Communication in all its aspects, not just its forms.

#### **4.1.5 The IUCN example**

I analyzed the situation of IUCN. However, for the reasons exposed, I could only do this as an external observer, by using simply the documentation that was either available in written or on IUCN's or associates' web site, with the exception of few interviews with members of the organisation. I hope that in the case of a further research, the IUCN would be more involved.

Keeping the focus on IUCN, I tried to explain why I initiated an innovation project in that direction. I evaluated then the predictions and warnings I had made six months earlier at the time of my first contacts either with IUCN and the Wikimedia Foundation, in particular with what regards a new competing web project that was about to start its operations.

With a background of technical engineering, I discovered that it is at least as important to take into consideration the findings of social psychology and sociology at each step of implementation of an e-governance project, be it for state or for civil society and I shall further explain why.

#### 4.1.6 Basic steps

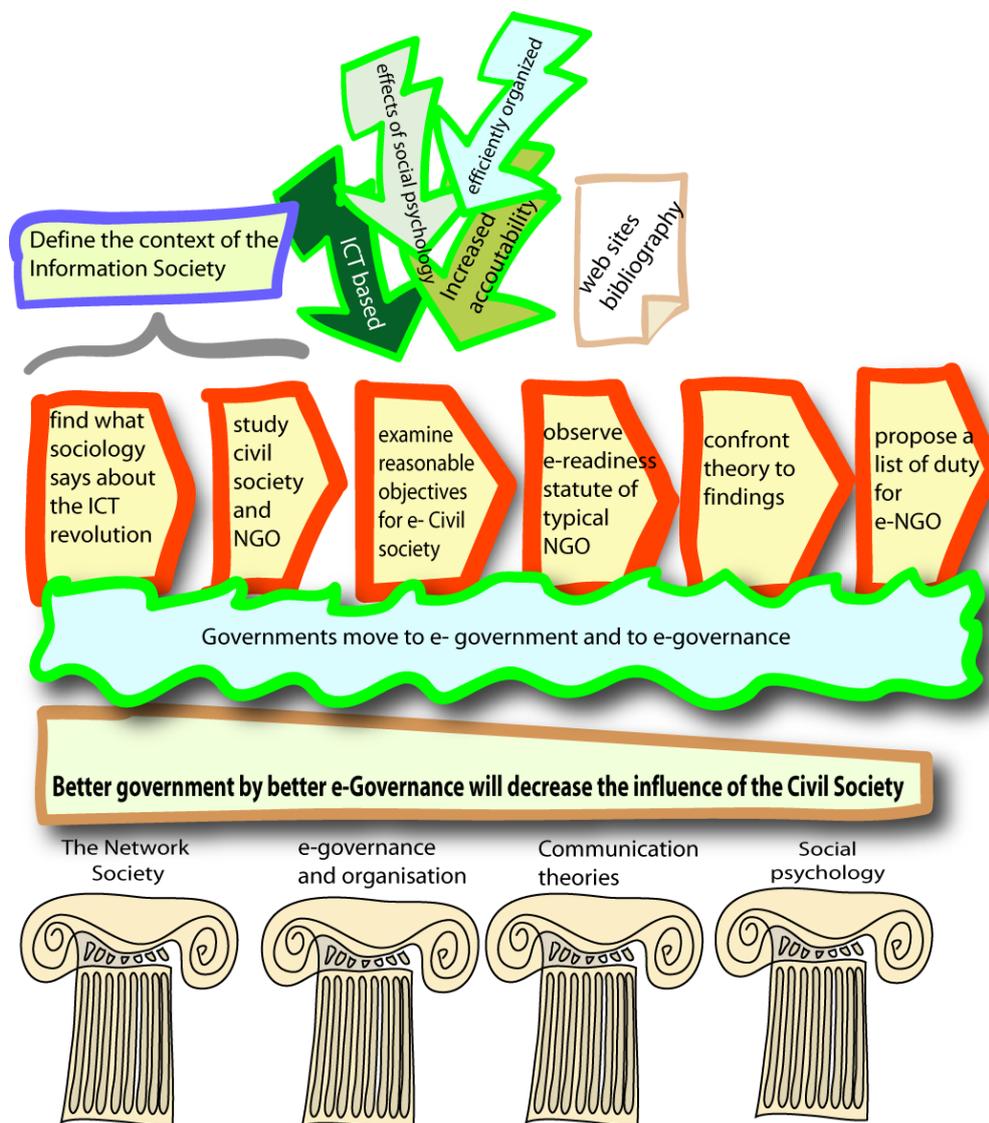


Figure 18 - Basic steps of Methodology

As we noticed, the development of this thesis articulated around the governments' move from e-Government to e-Governance. This change rests not only on the Networked Society and e-Governance, but also as I said largely on communication and social psychology and social sciences. Figure 18 above details the methodological steps in eight moves.

- ① Get familiarized with corresponding ideas expressed by contemporary sociological research, in particular of course, with what relates to the Civil Society and NGOs but also with what relates to the impacts of ICT on the Society. Theoretical assistance comes from the EPFL executive master on e-Governance and the research made by Manuel Castells over 12 years since 1984 and renewed until 2004.
- ② Produce a good and clear definition of terms like precisely 'Civil Society' and 'NGO' in not only their present acceptance but also as they result from their evolution in history.
- ③ The 'Information Society' is also part of the ICT context. Learn to know what this concept means by localizing and defining interfaces of e-Civil Society on one side related to

governments, e-Governments and in accordance with current plans of e-Governance and on the other side with new forms of social entities.

- ④ Examine reasonable objectives to the Civil Society in order to adapt it to the changing environment ...
- ⑤ ... Try next to check the degree of awareness of selected NGOs to the exposed problematic.
- ⑥ As usually, the theory must confront itself to the findings ...
- ⑦ ... to disclose the fields of reflections a hypothetical NGO wishing to engage on the e-Civil Society journey should handle.
- ⑧ Finally, conclude practically with a list of duty an e-NGO's Chief Communication Officer should fulfil to allow sensible and progressive e-Civil Society.

## **4.2 Methodology of the Innovation Project**

In the course of the development of this research, an 'Innovation Project' contributed to build theory and gather research data.

### **4.2.1 Definition of the Context and its influence on Methodology - Freedom of subject**

The present master program that supported this thesis is an executive master, which means that participants are required to be experienced leaders. In this particular case, I decided however to quit my job to devote full time to the master programme with the consequence that I was left without link whatsoever with a government, a governmental agency or an institution. This has advantages and drawbacks. In terms of advantage, the whole world was open to me. This means no imposed subject, no constraints of any kind and consequently the freedom to explore vast territories and new ideas. This is a great advantage as creativity, which is an essential part of innovation, fit badly with constraints.(MINTZBERG, 2005)

This freedom however has a cost. In effect, as an independent, one cannot expect any external support; in particular, while knocking at new unknown doors, there is a period to spend to be acquainted that is lost for effective research. It is quite normal, but it fits badly with the tight schedule of a master thesis.

### **4.2.2 Field of research**

The territory is immense indeed. There are landmarks however, that help you focus on major trends. Observing the tremendous changes that affect our societies, our institutions, our businesses, our way of living and eventually our future, I identified for the Innovation Project the move from vertical to 'horizontal' institutions and decided to explore that. There are foundations to my perception of the changes that happen. One of them is the concept of the Information Society, which was notably discussed at the two world summits on information society held in Geneva and Tunis. There is also the fact that, thanks to globalisation, people become more and more interconnected not only through communication networks, but also through their Internet culture. This factor will eventually leads individuals to a more and

more global way of thinking. Finally, there are global problems that affect all and nations that have trouble solving them.

#### **4.2.3 Readings**

Readings formed a very important part of my methodology, not to mention of course the different lectures I had during the course of the EPFL Executive Master on e-Governance. See the bibliography for a list of readings.

#### **4.2.4 Experience**

Finally, my professional experience influenced greatly my work and formed an unspoken methodology. Different experiments, observations, decisions, results obtained during more than 35 years of professional and intellectual development allowed me to manage my work in a form that would take too much space to describe here. Consequently, the reader will have to admit that some thought expressed here reflects the opinion of the writer and he will have to think of himself and confront his own experience and reflections with mine and eventually conclude for himself.

#### **4.2.5 Contextual Methodology**

Finally, the context of the innovation project decided for the methodology of its execution:

1. Get research material, by reading, listening, searching anything that has a connection, whatsoever with the subjects, what exists, what contradicts existing theory, what supports it, what makes it new, what will make you renounce to your project, etc.
2. Reflect, analyze, synthesize, design a presentable form for emerging ideas and concepts, try to make it clear, refine, iterate, avoid closing your mind, accept to be challenged, find solutions to problems, find problems you cannot solve, etc
3. Create a model, in this case, of a horizontal organisation, the conditions that make it happen, why and how it will influence existing organisations; stay immersed in your model day and night, discuss this model around you with ordinary people, find specialists and discuss again until it refines to a state worth presenting.
4. Imagine an example of application that fits with the conditions of the connected master thesis.
5. Search a partner organisation that would accept to allow you to test your ideas and/or application.
6. Discuss, negotiate and try to convince the partner that the idea was worth to become a plan and eventually a project. In my case, I had to convince the management of the IUCN and the President of the Wikimedia Foundation, which was not an easy task and eventually failed.
7. Finally transpose the lessons learnt in the Master Thesis.

## 4.3 Parameters of the Methodology

### 4.3.1 Developing a theory

As most part of the Innovation Project was about developing a theory on the change from verticality to horizontality, its methodology has to include, to some extent, the development of a theory. The reflections of Henry Mintzberg in his essay about *Developing Theory about the Development of Theory*<sup>73</sup> were a valuable source of inspiration. The following ideas extracted from this essay influenced my methodology: ‘*What makes me [Henry Mintzberg] salivate is induction: inventing explanations about things. Not finding them—that’s truth; inventing them. We don’t discover theory; we create it*’ and ‘*the creation of theory (...) relies on the process of induction—from the particular to the general, tangible data to general concepts*’. And finally: ‘*We get interesting theory when we let go of all (...) scientific correctness (...) and allow our minds to roam freely and creatively—to muse like mad, albeit immersed in an interesting, revealing context*’.

### 4.3.2 Acquiring data

The changes I study are profound and yet slow. The calendar of the Innovation Project did not allow to explore them much further than the entry gate. No gathering of data, no measurement could be made, almost no questioning of third parties. I think nevertheless that my personal findings and the concepts I developed through discussions with professionals or with citizens around, concerned by my findings, my experience, my observations and my thought are sufficient. In line with this last quote of Mintzberg: “*Theory is insightful when it surprises, when it allows us to see profoundly, imaginatively, unconventionally into phenomena we thought we understood*” to allow me to produce innovation and further matter of reflection.

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<sup>73</sup> See <http://www.mintzberg.org/articles.htm>; (Last updated 12/2006); visited on 25702/07

## 5 FINDINGS

It is quite common, when promoting change in an organisation, to start by observing its initial condition, notably in the light of available theories. The next strategic move involves imagination and discussion to finalize a list of desirable objectives for change. Finally, creativity and smartness at foreseeing consequences will let developing means and assemble resources to achieve the objectives.

The context of the project behind the Master Thesis was sufficiently developed in the introduction and in the theory above; it has to do with the effective and successful insertion of organised forms of the Civil Society – NGOs in our case – in the e-Governance trend of States.

We shall thus examine the initial situation in terms of communication, accountability, interrelation and e-readiness.

### 5.1 Present situation on the front of Communication

NGOs often carry in the public, but doubtlessly also internally, an image of socially – sometimes politically too – oriented organisations aiming at providing assistance to minorities or feeble populations harmed by conflicts, left over by the economy and mostly victims of the societal changes they have to endure. Globalization and modernity are the perceived enemies of social justice, as it is well known that the anterior situation was always better, on most aspects. State and democracy are unwilling or worse unable to help; therefore, NGOs have to enter the political sphere to exert pressure on State for it to correct and adjust its action to solve these issues in priority otherwise NGOs will eventually substitute for the State.

Does this image look good and correct? Does it reflect the reality of NGOs? If yes, will it enable the Civil Society to enter in the Informatization Age to adapt to the changes and to preserve or increase their efficiency? In addition, how does this fit with IUCN's image, both inside and outside?

#### 5.1.1 A local example

If we need a clue to measure the recent evolution of the image of the Civil Society on the front of communication, listen to what Mr Fernand Cuche, Minister of the Canton of Neuchâtel, Switzerland, member of the 'Green' Party said on the radio last Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup> (supra RSR1, "Forum" programme at 6:30PM). He was commenting the decision taken the previous Sunday, in a vote by 62% of the citizens of the canton of Sankt-Gallen, to cancel the right of local and regional environmentalist associations to oppose legally construction projects. The idea that formed the basis of this decision was that there are enough laws to protect locally the environment and that the citizens should trust the authorities for enforcing these laws:

*« Nous sommes arrivés à une situation où la législation en place permet de réaliser un développement durable. C'est quand même assez extraordinaire de penser qu'il y a un certain nombre d'années les organisations de protection de l'environnement, sans que ce soit un*

*coup d'Etat, ont obtenu ce droit de recours. Ça veut dire que la population était inquiète et qu'elle voulait se protéger contre un développement anarchique<sup>74</sup> ».*

The journalist interrupts: « *But today things are all right ...one could then go without this right of recourse?* » Cuche speaks on : « *[...] je ne fais pas le même constat que ma collègue [de Sankt Gallen], je constate aujourd'hui que dans le canton de Neuchâtel il y a des législations qui ont des lacunes et pour les années qui viennent les associations qui participent au droit de recours sont nécessaires pour améliorer la législation. Je ferais quand même quelques critiques à leur égard : le fait de la proximité c'est très bien, ça veut dire que les gens du WWF ou de Pro Natura ou de l'ATE ont une connaissance très proche des dossiers mais ils se laissent parfois enfermer dans des enjeux qui ne sont pas des enjeux importants pour l'avenir de la société et quelque fois j'aimerais qu'elles prennent – ces organisations – quelque peu plus de distance, je les sens des fois un peu trop conservatrices, mais ce qui est intéressant aussi dans la démarche que nous voulons instaurer dans le canton de Neuchâtel, c'est que dès qu'il y a un projet d'une certaine importance qui démarre, il faut les intégrer dès la départ dans le projet pour éviter les recours et éviter naturellement des retards.*<sup>75</sup> »

The journalist gives the word to the minister in charge in the canton of Sankt-Gallen. She says in substance that it is much more difficult to negotiate with local or regional associations – though they know local conditions – because they are very conservative and hard-headed while national associations are more professional, they employ lawyers and they are more prompt to find agreements. Turning again to Cuche, the journalist ask him whether governments are, because of the rapid changes, still able to cope with urbanization of landscape in Switzerland

Cuche : *Les enjeux que vous soulevez vont au-delà du droit de recours des associations, c'est une responsabilité politique forte entre deux actes importants qui sont le développement économique avec l'habitat et le développement en matière d'aménagement du territoire. Le canton de Neuchâtel a le projet d'avoir en 2008 une loi qui tenterait de réunir les deux choses et dans la mesure où on réussirait à être ensemble pour décider de l'avenir de l'aménagement du territoire sur une surface comme le canton de Neuchâtel, je pense que on pourrait envisager à terme d'enlever certaines prérogatives aux organisations de protection de l'environnement [...] Nous n'avons pas encore les outils de développement qui nous permettent la durabilité. [...] J'en conclus [...] que d'ici quelques années nous aurons la sagesse, la grande sagesse majoritaire au pouvoir, peut-être avec les Verts au pouvoir et si les Verts arrivent majoritaires au pouvoir alors nous n'aurons plus besoin des organisations*

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<sup>74</sup> We arrived at a situation where the legislation in place makes it possible to carry out sustainable development. It is nevertheless rather extraordinary to think that there is a certain number of years the organisations of environment protection, without it being a coup, obtained this right of recourse. That means that the population was anxious and that she wanted to protect herself from anarchistic development

<sup>75</sup> I do not make the same observations as my colleague [of Sankt Gallen], I note today that in the canton of Neuchâtel there are legislations which have gaps and for the years to come associations which take part in the right of recourse are necessary to improve the legislation. I would make nevertheless some criticise in this connexion: the fact of proximity, this is very well, it means that people of the WWF or Pro Natura or of the ATE have a knowledge very close to the files sometimes but they get locked up in stakes which are not important issues for the future of the society and some time I would like that they take - these organisations - somewhat more distance. I feel them sometime a little too conservative, but what is also interesting in the step that we want to found in the canton of Neuchâtel, it is that, as soon as there is a project of certain importance which starts, the associations should be integrated as of the start in the project to avoid the recourses and naturally to avoid delays.

*de protection de l'environnement mais nous donnerons un droit aux organisations économiques de recourir*<sup>76</sup>.

In conclusion of the talk, the ministers agree that the State of Right is preoccupied by the fact that associations can intervene in the democratic processes even after the citizens took decisions. However, Cuhe still thinks that if State does not take into account the preoccupations of the population, associations will regain power.

### 5.1.2 IUCN's example

IUCN is an extremely professional organisation and clearly wants to demonstrate this through a communication essentially based on publications<sup>77</sup> and reports. This communication is the main product of IUCN and forms its core business. IUCN fully discovered the potential of Internet as a communication media. It publishes today using a host of web sites. However, IUCN is obviously still the first phase of its 'e-Government' development. In effect, I found no interactivity on these sites. In many instances IUCN express its concern with Civil Society but makes not a single attempt to motivate individuals to get interested in its work. Individuals are invited instead to join local organisations...

*IUCN publishes an array of books on conservation and sustainable development issues. [It is] recognized as the scientific authority behind many of the management guidelines, state-of-the-art assessments and conservation policies in use today.*

IUCN provides access to over 3000 publications online, notably to all the titles published by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) from 1948 to the present and outsourced their commercialization separately in Europe and in the US.

We saw that NGOs are dependable partners of government precisely because of the unique and valuable information they can gather, compile and provide to experts. Their communication specialists form therefore an essential part of their organisation. IUCN, which is no exception, decided to give this department a high level of professionalism and recognized it in a declaration to assist future authors: **"IUCN and Publishing"**.

### 5.1.3 Quotes of IUCN<sup>78</sup> on publishing

*The written word, and increasingly the electronic word, remains IUCN's foremost communications tool. It is the medium through which IUCN communicates to its members, constituency and other target audiences.*

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<sup>76</sup> The stakes which you raise go beyond the right of recourse of associations, it is a strong political responsibility between two important acts which are economic development – with the habitat – and the development as regards town and country planning. The canton of Neuchâtel has the project to have in 2008 a law that would try to join together the two things and insofar as one would succeed in being together to decide future of town and country planning on a surface like the canton of Neuchâtel, I think that one could in the long term plan to remove certain prerogatives with the organisations of environmental protection [...] We do not have yet the development tools which allow us durability. [...] I concluded from this [...] that within a few years we will have wisdom, great majority wisdom in the power, perhaps with the Greens in power, and if the Greens take the majority at the power then we will not need anymore the organisations of protection of the environment but we will give a right to the organisations economic to recourse.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/publications/index.html>; accessed on 19/06/2007

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/publications/designguidelines/pubguide-1.htm>; accessed 18/06/2007

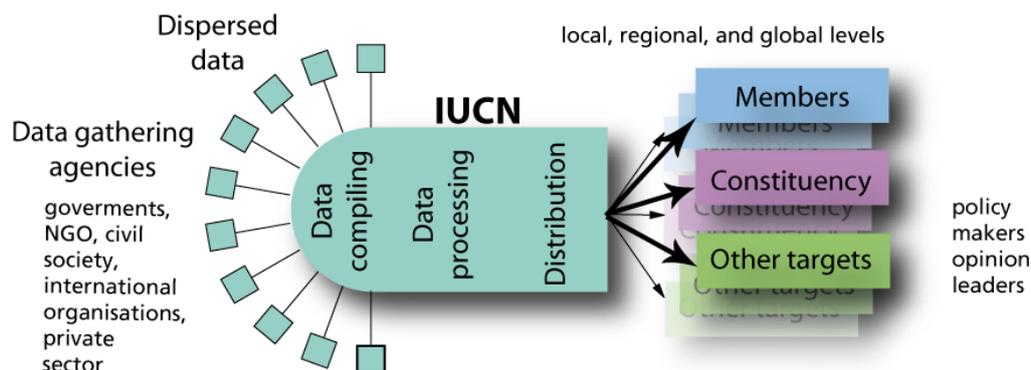


Figure 19 - Data flow @ IUCN

Observe that IUCN’s targets of communication form a closed group with no visible participation of the Civil Society, which is probably in line with the strategy of IUCN of aiming at deciders.

*Publications are the prime vehicle for the written word. They are the ‘visible’ face of IUCN’s work. They can be used to influence policy decision making, to inform, to provide guidelines for best practice, etc. They can also be used as training or fundraising tools.*

*In order for IUCN publications to fulfil successfully their objectives, it is vital that they be produced to the highest scientific and visual standards and that they reach the right audience.*

IUCN observes that biodiversity conservation is all about managing change in the social and economic environments which means that change may hinder biodiversity conservation but also that changing people and their social systems is required to ensure conservation and that this can only be achieved by the **means of Communication**<sup>79</sup>.

The UCN Publication Services web site<sup>80</sup> is organized like this:

Table 3 - IUCN Publication Services

Type	Comment
<b>General information</b>	<i>(Italic quotations from IUCN’s web site)</i>
<a href="#">Home</a>	
<a href="#">Distributor in N America and Canada</a>	Commercial distributor in US
<a href="#">Search catalogue / order online</a>	Commercial distribution in UK

<sup>79</sup> [www.iucn.org/themes/cec/AEO\\_Valsain\\_book/AEO\\_Introduction.pdf](http://www.iucn.org/themes/cec/AEO_Valsain_book/AEO_Introduction.pdf); accessed 20/06/2007

<sup>80</sup> See: <http://www.iucn.org/publications/sitemap.htm>; accessed 18/06/2007

Type	Comment
<a href="#">Library services</a>	<i>The IUCN library is a unique repository of publications, periodicals, scientific and technical reports prepared by IUCN, its Regional and Country Offices, Commissions and partners.</i>  <i>The library is used by IUCN staff, Regional and Country Offices, Commission members, members and environmental organizations, but it is also open to students, researchers or practitioners interested in environmental issues. It is recommended that you call or e-mail ahead of time to arrange a visit.</i>
<a href="#">Contact us</a>	Intended to provide contact information (phone number, email and postal address, for general queries regarding IUCN publications, as well as information about IUCN Annual Reports and World Conservation, for information concerning the services provided by the IUCN Library, including copyright permissions, for sales and ordering information on IUCN publications and for specific queries pertaining to IUCN publishing services as well as permission to translate IUCN copyright material
<a href="#">Hundertwasser posters</a>	Sponsoring activity without direct relation with communication
<b>Newsletters</b>	
<a href="#">World Conservation Journal</a>	The last issue of the magazine, dated January, touches a topic of great interest to us: <u>accountability</u> . The magazine editor asks readers : “ <i>What efforts are you or your organization making on the road to greater accountability? What examples of best practice have you come across? We welcome your feedback and will post comments in the next issue of World Conservation as well as on the IUCN website.</i> ” And what about IUCN’s accountability? We shall come back to this at § 5.2.1.
<b>Media</b>	
<a href="#">Books and the media</a>	Press releases relating to IUCN publications
<b>Publishing Information</b>	<b>A complete set<sup>81</sup> of professional and scientific publishing rules</b>

I observe in the Table 3 above that IUCN’s communication makes no particular effort in order to achieve the objective of changing people and their social system. We are left to assume that probably IUCN relies on its membership’s initiative to reach this goal. This does not help to clarify IUCN’s otherwise professional communication.

#### 5.1.4 Communication with non-governmental organisations

One would expect to find in IUCN’s main web sites traces of the inter-relations that exist with organisations that pursue similar objectives. In the ‘Members’ section, there are effectively links to some of the members’ web sites. On another page of the same web site, IUCN’s web manager invites members to request the insertion of links to their own home page but with little success. Despite the Conservation Commons Initiative<sup>82</sup>, which is based to my opinion on the need of solving the technical and logistical problem of merging differ-

<sup>81</sup> See: <http://www.iucn.org/publications/designguidelines/index.htm>; accessed 18/06/2007

<sup>82</sup> See § 5.7.4 on GBIF

ent environmental databases, there is no visible effort on the part of IUCN to promote the creation of a web community of environmental organisations.

On another hand, IUCN recently started a program of cooperation with the private sector (Shell, Swiss RE, Total, etc.) which shows that IUCN is open to change and useful compromise. Petroleum companies decided to advertise in green and IUCN developed a strategy to answer this need<sup>83</sup>.

Finally, an e-forum on the Future of Sustainability<sup>84</sup> hosted by IUCN on its own strategy of communication in the modern age gave birth to ideas that IUCN should consider seriously:

*The sustainability and environment debate has to think and act outside 'the box' in order to evolve. Simpler and clearer messages are needed. Environmental messages need to be converted into everyday speech and to integrate an understanding of the 'market'.*

*Civil society consists of complex and heterogeneous groups dealing with a wide range of aspects, from human rights to environment, from child and women's rights to bird conservation. However, the future of sustainability may depend on finding ways of linking the agendas of the environmental and social movements. In addition, civil society has to go beyond the monitoring of State, to monitoring the market and helping to change its behaviour. Social movements could provide examples of how business and social relationships can be developed and transformed.*

It is interesting to note that this forum of independent participants found out that Human beings and organizations have to move from individual towards collaborative perspectives, in other terms towards horizontality.

## 5.2 Initial situation on the front of Accountability

### 5.2.1 IUCN's vision on accountability

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and former IUCN Director General shares his personal and very interesting vision on accountability. According to a written declaration he made in the January 2007 issue of the IUCN's Magazine "World Conservation" accountability has played a key role in shaping the sustainability movement, as well as the very structures of the IUCN. Nevertheless, for him, accountability – the call for good governance through transparency and legitimacy of public power – works in two directions; it is a two sharp-edge sword. Accountability is the result of a "vociferous global media and citizens" empowered by ICTs and the Net, continually exposing cases of neglect and wrongdoing. The risk/ benefits balance linked to Communication therefore drives the quest for accountability. In this context, NGOs like the IUCN can use the need for accountability as a weapon to force stakeholders to take into account conservation of the environment in their plans and in their communication. Accountability is directed at serving IUCN's interests.

Steiner, in his article bases his reflection on the assumption that IUCN, because of its ancient legitimacy, has no need to be accountable. IUCN should rather engage its social responsibility to empower the crowds in their claim of their rights for accountability from the

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<sup>83</sup> IUCN's Operational Guidelines for Private Sector Engagement; <http://www.iucn.org/themes/business/>; accessed 22/06/2007

<sup>84</sup> [http://www.iucn.org/members/future\\_sustainability/](http://www.iucn.org/members/future_sustainability/); accessed 23/06/2007

part of those who endanger the environment. However, remember, and it is very important, that IUCN's communication is directed at officials and experts, not at NGOs or directly at the public.

Steiner justifies this position by the fact that governments less and less control societies, individuals and communities and therefore accountabilities are created without consequence: one can make all sorts of commitments without consequence as no one holds you accountable. The emergence of the private sector and civil society in shaping public discourse and creating public pressure has to be reflected in the way that the risks linked to accountability become effective.

### **5.3 Initial situation in terms of inter-relations**

#### **With whom and for whom should an NGO do e-NGO, e-IUCN presently?**

##### **5.3.1 IUCN's inter-relations with States**

This was largely exposed:

- Eighty four States are members of IUCN,
- Some local NGOs, also members of IUCN, sometimes oppose their own government which could involve IUCN in conflicts of interest,
- States are targets for IUCN's communication,
- States are direct or indirect targets for action, indirect in the case that some local NGOs acts on the incitation of IUCN,
- States are required to finance particular conservation projects and the collection of raw information,
- States host IUCN conferences,
- States have to be accountable to communication targets of IUCN.

There is a huge potential of conflict of interests in the inter-relation between States and IUCN. I shall not comment further, but keep in mind that the subject of discussion in the Master Thesis is the merging of e-Governance projects between Civil Society and State. Therefore, a careful identification and management of these potential conflicts at the light of e-Governance is crucial.

##### **5.3.2 IUCN's inter-relations with Civil Society**

IUCN refers frequently to the Civil Society. Here are a few examples<sup>85</sup> to consider:

- IUCN listens to the Civil Society:

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<sup>85</sup> Quotes from IUCN's web site, accessed between January and June 2007

*“We, Civil Society Organisations present at this Commission meeting would wish to bring to the attention of delegates a number of issues of common concern among the civil society organisations present at this Commission meeting<sup>1</sup>. We would urge the Commission to take seriously its responsibilities as the principal intergovernmental body that governs the human-managed environment including genes, species and agro-ecosystems - that part of the biosphere which is used by humans to produce food, other agricultural products, agro-ecosystem services and public ecological goods.<sup>86</sup>”*

– IUCN organises discussions:

*[With external funding and support,] IUCN organised a preparatory meeting for African civil society on 13 October 2003 in Yaoundé Cameroon. The main objectives of the meeting were, among others, to enable civil societies [...] to exchange their experiences on their regional recommendations, to contribute to the AFLEG Ministerial Declaration as well as to discuss the possibility of coming out with a Consolidated document for the African civil society. The purpose of the AFLEG is to promote good governance in the forest sector by combating the threat posed to forests from illegal logging, illegal trade, and wildlife poaching in Africa. Civil society participation in the process is necessary to ensure its credibility and effectiveness. With the support of DFID, IUCN–World Conservation Union organized regional workshops to facilitate civil society input into the AFLEG Ministerial Conference.<sup>87</sup>*

– IUCN published Positioning Statement of 2005 defines its audience. The Civil Society is mentioned along with NGOs as information providers:

- *at local, regional, and global levels,*
- *[at] policy makers and opinion leaders,*
- *from government, NGO, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector (especially finance, extractive, agriculture, fishing, forestry and tourism),*
- *in environment and non-environment domains,*
- *with Union members and donors.*

This simple statement is the source of discomfort at IUCN’s committee like this extract of minutes of meeting shows:

*“R Mittermeier said that the IUCN positioning statement was poor and was not accepted by Council, providing an opportunity for SSC<sup>88</sup> to add to the statement. He added that the idea of unknown biodiversity should be included and SSC should drive the race to discover all species. C Campagna warned against promoting the undiscovered species and people will not understand the need for conservation of species if there are so many more out there. JC Vié asked that the idea of diversity, increasing the productivity of a system, be incorporated into the message. J Smart asked for a list of messages – a menu - from which the Species Programme can select to produce a two-page document.*

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<sup>86</sup> Joint Statement by Civil Society Organisations attending the Ninth Regular Session of the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture Rome, 14-18 October, 2002

<sup>87</sup> AFLEG : Preparatory meeting for African civil society (October 13, 2003, Yaounde, Cameroon)

<sup>88</sup> SSC: Species Survival Commission, an organ of IUCN

*J Robinson asked what SSC is trying to change. If it is the perception of SSC within IUCN and the world then there are two audiences, each requiring a different message. The SC must decide on the primary audiences and on what they are trying to change and then the messages must be tailored. J Hutton said that the primary audience is the IUCN, which should be tackled first. JC Vié disagreed, saying that the external audience should be tackled first and IUCN will follow. R Pethiyagoda said that two products are required – a statement of strategy to guide SSC on how to communicate and who to communicate to and a clearly defined message. Then the practical question of gathering stories needs to be addressed.*

*H Dublin noted that both IUCN and SSC must also be incorporated into the messages. J Hutton asked if press stories should be released as IUCN or as IUCN SSC – saying that he prefers IUCN. H Dublin said that SG Chairs associate with SSC and want to keep its identity and that; furthermore, as it is SSC struggles to maintain its profile and fundraising ability relative to the larger machinery of IUCN.”*

### 5.3.3 Membership of IUCN<sup>89</sup>

The IUCN membership is not open to the public. The list in Table 6 below is made of data available on IUCN’s web site. According to IUCN’s statutes, members are attributed to four categories: States and government agencies, NGOs (national and international) and affiliates. Citizens that wish to join are invited to become member of affiliates or member NGOs.

The distribution of members shows that IUCN owes much to NGOs, at least in terms of quantity. How does this influence its legitimacy, its financial resources for daily operations and in term of processes, its efficiency remains for the moment a question to solve, but financially at least it is not the case.

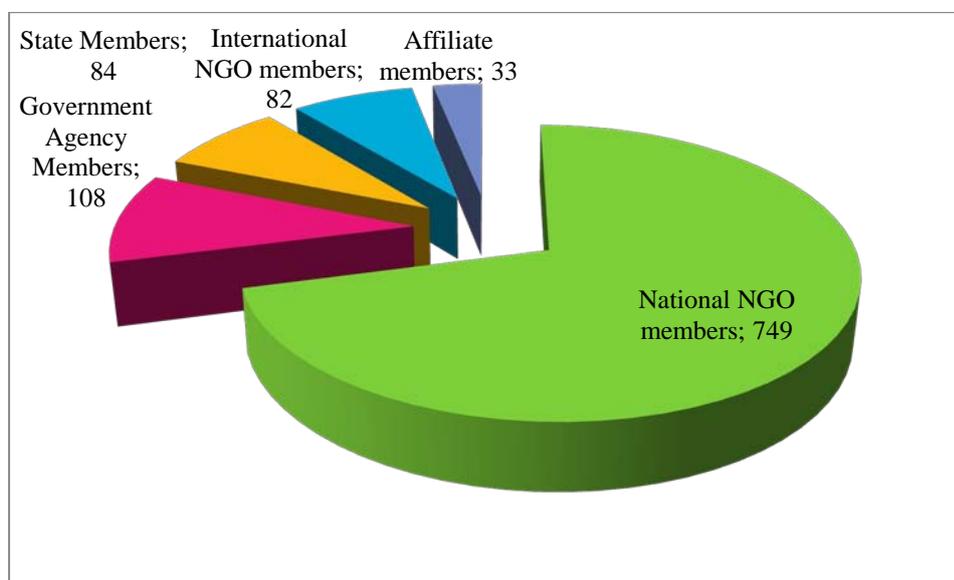


Figure 20- Distribution of IUCN's members

The financial image is effectively visibly very different<sup>90</sup> as the distribution of membership dues shows in the audited account.

<sup>89</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/members/mem-statistics.htm> ; accessed 21/06/2007

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/en/about/finances.htm> ; accessed 21/06/2007. See IUCN financial statement for 2006, Annex C, page 1 (page 24 of pdf)

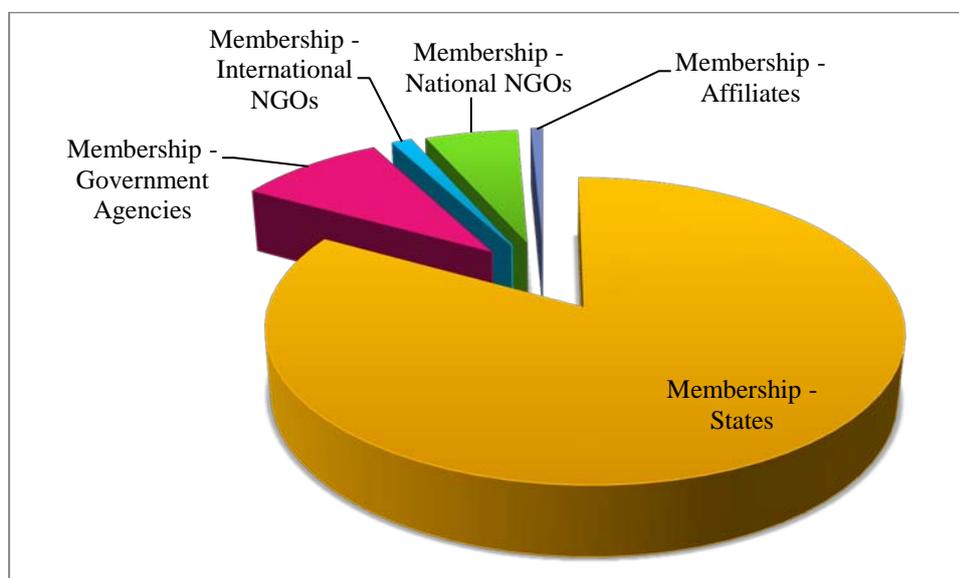
**Table 4 - IUCN 2006 Income Statement**

CONSOLIDATED INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2006 (In thousands Swiss Francs)	2006			
	Secretariat Unrestricted	Framework Agreements	Project Agreements	Total
EXTERNAL OPERATING INCOME				
<b>Membership dues invoiced during the year</b>	<b>10'155</b>			<b>10'155</b>
Swiss Government Tax Rebate	<b>1,563</b>			1'563
Agreements income	<b>771</b>	21'734	74'174	96'679
Publication sales and subscriptions	<b>72</b>	0	14	86
Other operating income	<b>2,325</b>	0	560	2'885

The distribution of membership dues (10'155'000CHF) is audited as follows:

**Table 5 - IUCN 2006 Membership dues**

Membership - States	8'441'541
Membership - Government Agencies	923'590
Membership - International NGOs	126'499
Membership - National NGOs	590'021
Membership - Affiliates	73'710
Membership - Miscellaneous	(784)



**Figure 21 - Distribution of yearly members' fees**

No comment! Except perhaps that we have to conclude that States subsidize the participation of NGOs to the IUCN. On what ground and for how long, we have no answer.

Table 6 – List of first 14 countries in terms of members' count

Region	Country	State	Gov Agencies	NGO	Affiliate	Total
North America and Caribbean	USA	1	6	66	1	74
Western Europe	United Kingdom	1		43	4	48
Western Europe	France	1	3	29	5	38
Western Europe	Netherlands	1	1	34		36
Western Europe	Spain	1	10	24	1	36
North America and Caribbean	Canada	1	9	23	2	35
South and East Asia	Australia	1	8	19	2	30
West Asia	Pakistan	1	3	21		25
South and East Asia	India	1	5	17		23
South and East Asia	Japan	1	1	21		23
Western Europe	Germany	1	1	20	1	23
Meso and South America	Ecuador	1		21		22
Western Europe	Italy	1	3	15	2	21
Africa	South Africa	1	2	14	3	20

The list of Table 6 above shows where IUCN knows its highest success in terms of members, regardless other factors. The North-American 'market' is also the place where most recent competition comes from.

### 5.3.4 The Internet social network of IUCN

Figure 23 below represents an instant picture of the 'social network' of IUCN's web site. It shows the hyperlinks that external web sites have set up to point on iucn.org (which is further subdivided in three main domains, the IUCN itself, the SSC (Survival Species Commission) and the Red List). I used the TouchGraph software, available on the Internet<sup>91</sup>, to compile this figure.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2007, I did a detailed analysis of this diagram, based on the verification of each of the links. It showed that out of 170 active links, several of them were multiple<sup>92</sup>, 23 came from IUCN's sub-web, 50 came from institutions partners declared on the main page, 57 came from NGO members, 27 came from national web sites (a vast majority from the US) and 14 from information and news groups' web sites.

<sup>91</sup> See <http://touchgraph.com>; accessed 26/07/07

<sup>92</sup> A multiple link means that the same organisation, the WWF for example, manages several links from its web site to the divers sections of IUCN's which means that the number of institutions that link to IUCN is lower than the figures above.





Table 8 - Web social network of IUCN by category as of 18.06.2007

	<b>IUCN Sub webs</b>	<b>Partner Institution</b>	<b>NGO members</b>	<b>State // nat. dep't.</b>	<b>Information web</b>	<b>SUM</b>
<b>iucn.org</b>	3	11	17	0	0	31
<b>Red List</b>	5	10	13	2	1	31
<b>SSC</b>	2	13	6	5	0	26
<b>IUCN/ about</b>	6	10	5	3	2	26
<b>ISSG</b>	5	0	12	12	0	29
<b>Red list categories</b>	1	7	4	5	11	28
<b>SUM</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>170</b>

This gives us an idea of IUCN's initial conditions before entering an e-Governance project and, in addition, a tour of iucn.org will complement our information.

## 5.4 The Innovation Project as example of possible change

### 5.4.1 Available Study Topics for the Innovation Project

During the first contacts I had with the IUCN, I was given a choice between the different following subjects, susceptible, according to Ms Jeanrenaud, to accept some form of horizontality:

- The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species<sup>94</sup>
- Conservation Commons<sup>95</sup>
- Mangroves for the Future<sup>96</sup>
- Video-Message Forum, as follow-up on comments made during the week 4 of the Forum on the Future of Sustainability held between 11-15 September 2006<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/themes/ssc/redlist.htm>; accessed 23/06/2007

<sup>95</sup> <http://www.conservationcommons.org>; accessed 23/06/2007

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/tsunami/>; accessed 23/06/2007

<sup>97</sup> See § 5.1.4 above

- Countdown 2010<sup>98</sup>
- IUCN Environmental Law Portals<sup>99</sup>
- Network engagement<sup>100</sup>

As expressed above, I did choose the Red List. The rough idea behind the project was to add a collaborative front end on the Red List in the form of a wiki. Constraints were at least to keep or even increase the degree of trust there is in the Red List thanks to the professionalism of its managers while increasing both the interest of the public to the work of IUCN and its active participation in enhancing the quantitative aspects of the list.

#### 5.4.2 Wik\_IUCN

Wikipedia is a highly horizontal, simple, well-known and flexible structure. It is powerful, fearless and competes very efficiently against existing knowledge repositories. There is very little doubt that someday it will compete with IUCN huge Red List database like it has competed with the Encyclopaedia Britannica to mention only that one. In addition, naturally Wikipedia is no longer alone as new run fast in the interconnected world. Ask yourself whether someone will stop Wikipedia someday. We all know the weaknesses of Wikipedia, a place where anybody just publishes anything about anything; exposed to vandals, to political bias, but we should also consider the immense strength of Wikipedia and its hundreds of thousands of voluntary redactors.

Table 9 - Statistics of articles (incl. redactors) in first nat. languages Wikipedia (01.06.2007)

Rank	Language	Articles	New articles	Growth	Redactors (05/2006)
1	<a href="#">English</a>	1'811'430	644'718	55%	114893
2	<a href="#">German</a>	592'031	183'253	45%	31392
3	<a href="#">French</a>	501'658	206'697	70%	12868
4	<a href="#">Polish</a>	384'757	145'739	61%	5051
5	<a href="#">Japanese</a>	374'721	155'928	71%	8401
6	<a href="#">Italian</a>	304'080	141'348	87%	4766
7	<a href="#">Dutch</a>	300'579	99'519	49%	5033
8	<a href="#">Portuguese</a>	261'568	119'043	84%	3736
9	<a href="#">Spanish</a>	238'157	114'996	93%	6970
10	<a href="#">Swedish</a>	231'631	67'308	41%	2691
11	<a href="#">Russian</a>	176'332	92'517	110%	2512
12	<a href="#">Chinese</a>	127'944	57'812	82%	3774
13	<a href="#">Finnish</a>	117'088	52'785	82%	2170
14	<a href="#">Norwegian</a>	113'708	50'182	79%	1485

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.countdown2010.net/europe?c=About&s=article>; accessed 23/06/2007

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/themes/law/elp00.html>; accessed 23/06/2007

<sup>100</sup> [http://www.iucn.org/themes/cec/newsletters/newsletter\\_jan\\_2006.htm](http://www.iucn.org/themes/cec/newsletters/newsletter_jan_2006.htm); accessed 23/06/2007

Wikipedia is the most impressive example of horizontality and its achievements are incredible. It allowed millions of people to use and a fraction of them to implement the most used and complete encyclopaedia ever. Its core is based on Open Source Software and relatively simple to transport to other platforms for specific purposes. It is also among the best example of visibility one can imagine.

Shouldn't we consider using a Wiki layer to enhance the symmetrical access to IUCN's huge, accurate and reliable data base and network of professionals in order to enrich it further and, more specifically, to transform it from its present highly vertical structure to an horizontal, flexible and federated one? To an access mode that would be more in line with the expectations of today's 'targets' of IUCN?

### **5.4.3 Wiki Layer on top of existing databases**

According to the well-known Pareto Principle (80-20%), the development of the Red List has probably reached a point where the efforts needed to perfect it further might now escape the power of the IUCN, in terms of resources and time available. In an organisation like the IUCN, I guess that the allocation of resources to a particular project by its management relates to the part that project – the Red List here – plays in achieving IUCN's objectives. This issue is a typical consequence of vertical models. It is also a consequence of the entropy increase in systems. I thought that in order to overcome this problem, a horizontal model would become more efficient, especially when considering the energy needed to develop further the Red List that would have to come from outside the system. I tried to demonstrate this with the help of IUCN and the Wikimedia Foundation.

The theory of transforming vertical systems into horizontal ones, with the contribution of ICT, its flexibility and a federative approach should demonstrate – at least it was my objective – that horizontal systems are open and therefore that they are prone to receiving 'energy' from a multitude of origins. Vertical systems grow on a unique source of energy that is part of the system itself. Should the energy source exhaust, then the system will collapse (a firm that makes no benefit goes bankrupt). On the opposite, we all know organisations that became incredibly valuable simply by organizing horizontality.

We did not have to reinvent horizontality; we even less needed to underestimate the huge work done by the Red List Committee. The simple question was therefore: How add a Wiki layer in front of the Red List in order to make it horizontal without consuming more energy in the system and without decreasing in any manner its value.

### **5.4.4 Innovation Project's objects of study**

To answer the questions raised by the Innovation Project, I had to ensure the cooperation with both IUCN and the Wikimedia Foundation. At the beginning of this year (2007), they both agreed though I received from Wikimedia President Ms Florence Devouard the warning that previous contacts with similar organisations all failed in the past.

Table 10 - Functions, processes and Agents of Wik\_IUCN

Functions	Processes	Agents
Ensure Knowledge Integrity and safety	Edit details on a particular species	Allow the public to survey that particular species and provide their data
Observatory of Conservation laws and regulations	Add	Professionals
New entities in the data base for accountability like:	Change	Specialized NGOs
What does your country do to protect that particular species?	Challenge - Normally absent in a vertical organisation	Volunteers
What do your favourite NGOs do to protect that particular species?	Moderation	Hobbyists
Who are the sponsors?	New entries checked by authorized experts or comities	Free arbitrator moderated by federator
Other entities as needed		
Allow independent scientific research to be linked to Wik_IUCN		
Public use of IUCN law portal	Legislators compare and adapt existing legislation	
Allow citizens to act efficiently		
Lobby locally or constitute themselves as innovative action groups		

## 5.5 IUCN's rejection of Wik\_IUCN

This warning proved later to be applicable for the IUCN as well as, at the end of January 2007, I received a message from this organisation informing me of the decision of IUCN's Management to stop that reflection. As I had started my studies early in November 2006, I had a list of study objects in my Wik\_IUCN Project ready. I present them very briefly below. Regrettably, they still keep their question marks.

It is important however to consider the rejection of the IUCN of Web2.0 solutions as symptomatic of an organisation that relies conservatively on its assets like reputation, well seated organisation, well established structures and the like. The IUCN clearly distrusts initiatives like web social networks, wikis and reputational votes for example. I wonder for how long the IUCN will be able to keep its position. As we shall see below, the competition to scarce resources affects the IUCN like any other organisation. IUCN gets the most important part of its financial resources from States. This may change the day governments get word that other organisation are able to provide similar services at no cost for them.

### 5.5.1 All interested people interact with Red List's database

The functions, processes and agents that need to be addressed in order to ease acceptance of the principle of Wik\_IUCN figure at Table 10 above.

The WIK\_IUCN should have allowed citizens to check whether their country effectively conserve biodiversity according to the threats that show on the Red List by means of a law or ordinance or any form of legislative act, enforces application of the law and is able to provide examples of this enforcement. Such information should have been available not only to the country of residence, but also to the neighbouring countries - to allow comparisons - and to the country of citizenship (to allow political pressure) at will.

## 5.6 Global problems to address with Wik\_IUCN

### 5.6.1 Access to information channels

Like with any e-Governance programme, Internet penetration is an important parameter to ensure that the flow of information to and from the WIK\_IUCN is sufficient to guaranty its success. In addition, when physical access is granted, content access becomes the second challenge. In some countries (China for example), government still governs the content and the means of communication. However, of course, this will change in a near future as the so-called Digital Divide resolves.

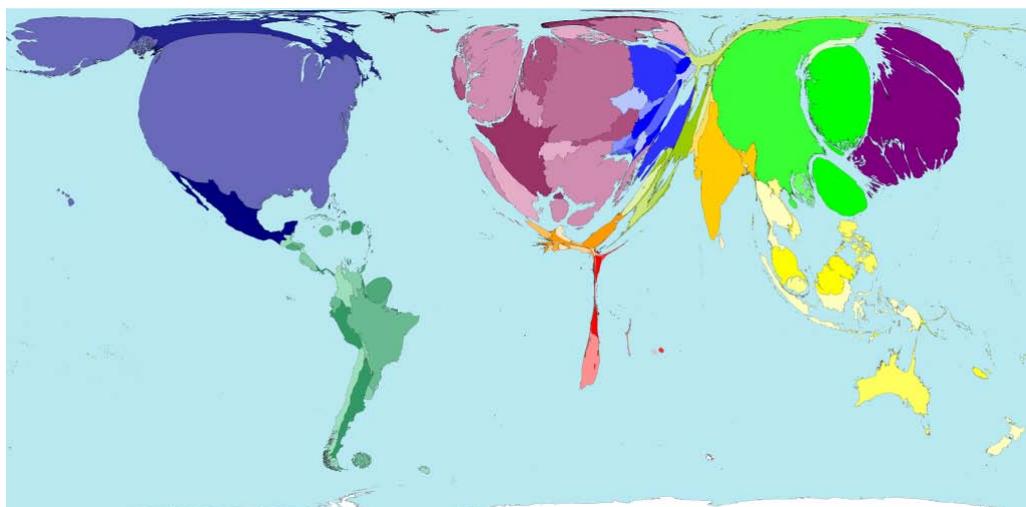


Figure 24 - Cartogram of Internet penetration in 2002<sup>101</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See <http://www.worldmapper.org/images/largepng/336.png>; accessed on 05.06.2007

## 5.7 Particular problems to address with Wik\_IUCN

### 5.7.1 Trust in a horizontal organisation<sup>102</sup>

The problematic of maintaining and increasing trust in Wik\_IUCN involves the finding out of what makes the IUCN's Red List trustable on one side, how does Wikipedia ensure and maintain trust on its side, is it transposable to Wik\_IUCN and how does the cost of maintaining trust compare with the cost of maintaining a 'closed' vertical list.

In a paper published by the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) titled "*In whom we trust? The development of particularised trust inside associations*", the authors, Francisco Herreros Vázquez and Henar Criado Olmos studied in particular the question of the development of social trust inside associations and in particular trust between the members of associations themselves. In their paper, they argue that *the development of trust among the members of an association depends on the type of internal organisation of the association in question*. Their argument is that *undemocratic organisations, that is, organisations where the decision-making process is in the hands of a few of their members, unaccountable to the majority of the membership, - what I call here vertical organisation - are less likely to foster trust than democratic organisations*.

Putnam<sup>103</sup> has already pointed out that horizontal associations are more conducive to the development of trust relations. According to Putnam, opportunistic behaviour is more likely in a vertical organisation.

After developing their subject, Vázquez and Olmos demonstrated that vertical organisations are contributing less to the development of individualised trust. *There are at least as many conflicting preferences as in a horizontal organisation, but there are two differences as compared to the horizontal organisation that impede the achievement of trust: the presence of asymmetries in information and of power between the two sides of the organisation. Particularised trust flourish more in horizontal organisations than in vertical ones. Members of horizontal associations are more likely to trust their fellow members than members of vertical ones. For all income levels, the probability of trusting in fellow members is higher in horizontal than in vertical associations. More concretely, this probability is twenty to forty per cent higher in horizontal associations*.

### 5.7.2 Reputation and Competition for scarce resources

Competition exists in the domain of NGO like in any domain. An organisation like the IUCN may think that its long existence and the quality of its members may protect it from competition<sup>104</sup>. Its reputation is of course one of the major asset of IUCN and will encourage IUCN think that, because of its reputation and of the links it builds with members, competition is not a major risk. How it is checked is another aspect. Looking back at

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<sup>102</sup> See [http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECpR/publications/eps/onlineissues/summer2003/research/vazquez\\_olmos.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECpR/publications/eps/onlineissues/summer2003/research/vazquez_olmos.htm); page visited on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007

<sup>103</sup> Putnam, R. (1993), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press. (1993: 173-175)

<sup>104</sup> (IUCN, 2005)

Table 8 above, one will note that in order to benefit from that reputation, partner institutions linked their website with IUCN's 50 times, NGOs 57 and information services 17, Wikipedia among them. IUCN is aware of the value of reputation and uses it as a weapon in its armoury. In an article titled "Bet on Green investments<sup>105</sup>", it notes the fact that civil protests tend to influence negatively the stock exchange induced banks to insist on the character of environment friendliness of development projects they were asked to finance.

Between July and October 2004, the IUCN's National Red List Advisory Group sent a survey to the 180 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) national focal points. The purpose of this survey was to assess the current and potential use of the IUCN Red List criteria and the regional guidelines in national conservation efforts. They received 37 spontaneous responses to the survey and a further amount of 10 after calling all those who did not answer at first. Among the questions, let us note three that relates to the level of interdependency based on reputation that exists between IUCN's and national 'Red Lists'

*Who developed or will develop the [national] list (may select more than one)?*

<i>Governmental organization (ministry, department, wildlife agency, etc.)</i>	37	(84%)
<i>Non-governmental organization</i>	22	(51%)
<i>Regional IUCN-SSC office</i>	5	(12%)
<i>Private organization</i>	5	(12%)
<i>Other (please specify:)</i>	14	(33%)

*(More than 100% because of several answers were possible)*

Note the importance of NGOs as information providers.

*If IUCN Red List criteria were/ will be used (even if they were modified), why were they selected as the criteria of choice? (Select as many options as apply)*

<i>Reason</i>	<i>Number of replies</i>	<i>% of responses</i>
<i>Objectivity</i>	28	74
<i>Convenience of using an already-developed system</i>	28	74
<i>Reputation of the IUCN criteria</i>	27	71
<i>Previous and current global and regional use of the criteria</i>	26	68
<i>Quantitative nature of the criteria</i>	25	66
<i>Increased comparability between country in question and other regions in which the criteria have also been used</i>	25	66
<i>To allow assessments to be incorporated into the global Red List</i>	20	53
<i>To evaluate/apply the new Regional Guidelines</i>	13	34
<i>Other</i>	3	8

NOTE: percentages are out of 38, the number of countries that have or will use the IUCN criteria (also the number that answered the question)

*Was the resulting national threatened species list reported to the IUCN/SSC Red List Committee, or will it be, if the list has not yet been created?*

*Yes 13 (35%)*

<sup>105</sup> [www.iucn.org/publications/worldconservation/docs/2007\\_01/09\\_world\\_conservation\\_2007\\_01\\_fr.pdf](http://www.iucn.org/publications/worldconservation/docs/2007_01/09_world_conservation_2007_01_fr.pdf); accessed 21/06/2007

No 22 (59%)

Unsure 2 (5%)

NOTE: % is out of 37, the # of respondents that answered this question

Most countries are not interested in reporting their national threatened species lists to the IUCN. Why is that so, reputation, objectivity, other reason?

In the world of international organisations, IUCN benefits from a better comprehension. IUCN is the official technical advisory body to the World Heritage Committee on natural heritage:

“In general we – the World Heritage<sup>106</sup> – are pleased to note that [our] report is very positive about the work of IUCN and Christina Cameron specifically notes that: “*IUCN enjoys a high reputation for professionalism and scientific rigour. I hope that my report contributes to solidifying that reputation and enhancing IUCN’s reputation where appropriate*”.

Competition arrives from the Net. Competitors vie for funds eventually, though they may inter-relate for joint objectives. Many links from ARKive picture site point to IUCN Red List. Visibly, ARKive benefits – I would say parasite – IUCN’s reputation to build its own.

### 5.7.3 ARKive

ARKive introduces itself as a not-for-profit initiative of *The Wildscreen Trust*. It was founded by Christopher Parsons, former head of the BBC’s Natural History Unit and creator of the *Life on Earth* television series. ARKive puts together into one centralised digital library, accessible from the Net of course, films, photographs and audio recordings of the world’s species.

ARKive claims support of the world’s key conservationists including IUCN, UNEP-WCMC, WWF and Conservation International. Images were donated by the BBC, National Geographic, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, as well as commercial picture libraries, scientific institutions, and individuals. More than £4million of funding has been received until 2003 notably from the UK’s Lottery Fund and Hewlett Packard. Its first focus of activity was an initial group of 500 of the world’s threatened species (in parallel with a “British Chapter” featuring 1000 species)<sup>107</sup>.

IUCN showed a real interest in ARKive but inside the organisation, the problematic of co-operation sounds different:<sup>108</sup>

### External liaisons: Discussion Points

#### ARKive

Further to the background document in the meeting pack, H Dublin<sup>109</sup> briefed the S[teering] C[ommittee] on ARKive and explained how keen they have been to secure a formal relationship with IUCN/SSC. In addition, H Dublin also mentioned that ARKive had asked her to

<sup>106</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/35/>

<sup>107</sup> [intranet.iucn.org/webfiles/doc/SSC/SSCwebsite/Species\\_/species37.pdf](http://intranet.iucn.org/webfiles/doc/SSC/SSCwebsite/Species_/species37.pdf) ; accessed 20/06/2007

<sup>108</sup> SSC STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING WCC 3.2; Meeting of the 2005-2008 SSC Steering Committee; Puerto Madryn, Argentina, 7th-9th December 2005

<sup>109</sup> President of the Species Survival Commission (SSC)

serve on their Board in her personal capacity and that she also sought SC advice on this. She explained that due to ARKive's well-intended but naïve understanding of the complexities within IUCN and, subsequently, their multiple approaches within the organization, matters had become unnecessarily complicated over preceding months. This took some time to sort out within IUCN. In doing so, it became clear that ARKive was primarily looking for a partnership with SSC and enhanced access to SSC SG members' photographs. Two draft MOUs had been prepared by ARKive, both involving SSC. Between the DGO, the Global Communications Unit, the Species Programme and the SSC it had been discussed and agreed that neither IUCN nor SSC should sign an MOU with ARKive. In the case of the SSC, it was not possible for the Chair or the SSC SC to commit to any action on the part of Commission members due to possible infringement on their individual, intellectual property rights.

M Samways agreed that the MOUs should not be signed. C Imboden asked what was in the deal for SSC and SSC members. H Dublin replied that ARKive would professionally archive their photographs in exchange for special access. R Mittermeier asked if they sell the photographs and G Mace replied that they do not, as they are a charitable organisation. J Robinson suggested H Dublin writes to the SG Chairs encouraging them to send their photographs to ARKive, but suggested that she should then not be on their Board as it could be construed as a conflict of interest. H Dublin replied that the SP communication staffs have encouraged the SGs to contribute to ARKive. She said that she could look into the idea of writing a letter encouraging the SGs to work with ARKive under no obligation but would consult with the SP Communications staff to determine the necessity of doing so.

#### 5.7.4 GBIF

The mission of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) is to facilitate the digitisation and global dissemination through the Internet of primary biodiversity data all over the world. The IUCN integrates GBIF through its Conservation Commons Initiative that was one of the proposed subjects for the Innovation Project.

The GBIF is supported by financial contributions from 26 countries. The Office of International Science and Engineering of the National Science Foundation funds the United States' contribution, which constitutes about 20 percent of the total GBIF budget.

It is interesting to note that in the figure<sup>110</sup> promoting its 'Conservation Commons Project' the IUCN mentions GBIF as one of the providing partners along with organisations that relate very closely to the IUCN like WDPA<sup>111</sup> (*The World Database on Protected Areas provides the most comprehensive dataset on protected areas worldwide and is managed by UNEP-WCMC in partnership with the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas*<sup>112</sup> (WCPA) and the World Data-

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<sup>110</sup> see Figure 25 below, copyrighted by the IUCN, extracted from the project's brochure

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/wdpa/>; accessed 21/06/2007

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa>; accessed on 21/06/2007

base on Protected Areas Consortium<sup>113</sup>), Ecolex<sup>114</sup>, PALnet<sup>115</sup> and the SIS Red List that we know.

Observe that ARKive does not appear in Figure 25 below:

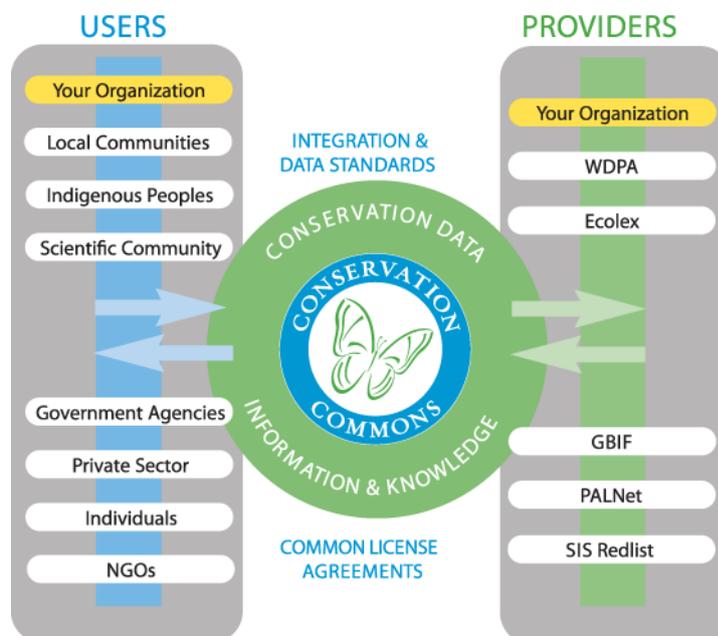


Figure 25 - © IUCN Creative Commons project

### 5.7.5 Other key issues with Wik\_IUCN

The keeping of existing strengths and qualities of IUCN which is of course one of the key issues was not addressed because of the circumstances as was the problematic of Intellectual Property Right Protection. Both should naturally never be neglected in any case.

## 5.8 Results and observations

Very shortly after IUCN informed me of its decision to halt its cooperation with this experiment, it opened a position for a Head of the Information Management Group (IMG). It is probably a coincidence but it provided me with valuable information on the vision and missions proclaimed by IUCN, as it needed to advertise for this important position in its organisation chart. The job vacancy announcement figures below *quasi in extenso*. In the announcement, the underline is mine, as I want to emphasize some of its aspects.

### 5.8.1 Job Vacancy for 'Head - Information Management Group'

Duty station: IUCN Headquarters, Gland, Switzerland

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.unep-wcmc.org/wdpa/consortium.cfm>; accessed 21/06/2007

<sup>114</sup> Information service on environmental law, operated jointly by FAO, IUCN and UNEP/  
<http://www.ecolex.org/en/info.php?language=en>; accessed 21/06/2007

<sup>115</sup> The Protected Areas Learning Network does not exist yet. It will be an interactive, web-based knowledge management tool for protected area managers and stakeholders . See  
<http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/english/outputs/palnet.htm> ; accessed 21/06/2007

Reporting to: Director, Global Operations

*The World Conservation Union (IUCN) was founded in 1948 and brings together nearly 1,100 members (States, government agencies, NGOs and affiliates) and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. Its mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. Within the framework of global conventions, IUCN has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. IUCN has approximately 1,000 staff, most of whom are located in its regional and country offices while some 150 work at its Headquarters in Gland, Switzerland. (...).*

## **BACKGROUND**

*The mission of the Information Management Group (IMG) is to provide leadership and strategic direction in formulating global information management policies and practices, as well as to provide secure, reliable, state of the art information and communication technology infrastructure, tools and service to enable accomplishment of IUCN operations. IMG also provides technical support to Programme and Strategies as required to achieve the objectives and mandate of the Union, including knowledge management and performance assessment on a global basis.*

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES**

*The Head, IMG is a credible IT leader who:*

- *provides leadership in developing and implementing information policies and plans to mobilize existing and new information resources and put them at the service of IUCN's programmes, communications efforts and management services in its Headquarters and offices around the world;*
- *uses his/her excellent communication and presentation skills to provide leadership within and outside IUCN on the use of information and information management tools for conservation;*
- *raises awareness within the global conservation community of the role of information and knowledge; represents IUCN at telecommunications, Internet, data and information management events and forums;*
- *advises the IUCN Secretariat on information policy, standards, and ensures the necessary state-of-the-art information tools and services are provided;*
- *is able to draw upon a long experience in information management to assess information needs and capacities and formulate cost-effective plans to address priority needs to meet programmatic, communications and management objectives;*
- *using his/her broad technical knowledge of current and emerging information technology, assists IUCN management in understanding IT-management issues and to make technology choices and decisions on effective IT investments that will yield real business benefits;*

- *works with partners and technical specialists to identify and develop information tools and services that are usable and that work.*

*The Head is a (...) manager, (...) guides a team of information professionals to provide a range of services (...):*

- *Partnerships, networks and institutional capacity to better collect, integrate and synthesize data and information to support conservation objectives.*
- *Technical support for the IUCN public web site and extranet to disseminate information and inform the conservation community.*
- *IUCN intranet knowledge network (...).*
- *Technical support for the Library and document delivery systems for media and publications.*
- *Information technology (hardware and software) infrastructure for the global Secretariat including support to regional, country and outposted offices.*
- *HQ local area network services, support and computer training.*

*The Head is responsible for administration of IMG staff and budget and participates, as necessary, in IUCN committees and advisory bodies.*

*Requirements:*

- *Minimum 10 years' progressive relevant work experience in information management, including substantial experience at the international level.*
- *(...) knowledge of environment information systems.*
- *Demonstrated ability to provide strategic direction and carry through implementation of broad based initiatives within the organization and with external partners.(...)*

A few weeks later, IUCN published a new **VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT**. I propose to read it also to complement further our information. In effect, contrary to the Head IMG's position, that one looks heavily inspired by a report issued by a business consultant hired by IUCN to develop the concept of Knowledge Management. The output of that study might not represent the real position of IUCN but it will give us an example of the strategy planning of an important NGO. The question that this announcement raises however is whether an NGO that is so different of a private company in its objectives and means will share or not the same strategy models. In effect, private companies are acting in a competitive environment and a free market, the NGO have a very different environment as we have seen above.

## **5.8.2 Job Vacancy for 'Knowledge Management Special Adviser**

Reporting to: Director - Global Strategies  
Location: IUCN Headquarters, Gland, Switzerland

## BACKGROUND

*For the past two Intersessional Terms, IUCN has been called upon to strengthen its capacity to capture, share and learn from the knowledge of its projects and programmes, its experts, volunteers and members. External Reviews<sup>116</sup> and Studies<sup>117</sup> of the past few years have confirmed that knowledge management is a key driver for IUCN's future strategy and evolution, and that IUCN urgently needed to develop and implement a Knowledge Management Strategy.*

Observe the lack of concrete objective in this search to strengthen Knowledge Management in IUCN.

*Subsequently the Knowledge Management Initiative was launched and a Special Adviser - Knowledge Management joined IUCN Headquarters in March 2005 with the specific mandate to provide IUCN's Executive Management Group with the capacity and interface to lead this change management initiative. The Adviser made significant strides in building and promoting a conceptual understanding of knowledge management within the IUCN Secretariat which concluded with the development of a KM strategy.*

*The Strategy offers a sound conceptual framework and outlines the work that needs to be undertaken in six Strategic Areas):*

- 1. Improving access to IUCN's information and knowledge;*
- 2. Fostering an organizational culture that values knowledge workers and encourages knowledge management; [which was the core business of IUCN for the last 49 years]*
- 3. Embedding knowledge management in roles and work processes; [which is finally the only real reason for implementing KM in an organisation]*
- 4. Sharing, learning and creating across institutional boundaries;*
- 5. Strengthening IUCN's knowledge base for greater impact;*
- 6. Enhancing capacities to serve and influence target audiences.*

*The Strategy will continue to evolve and be refined, and the next step is for the conceptual understanding of KM to be effectively translated into practical improvements and innovations across the organization. IUCN is now seeking to recruit a knowledge management professional to lead and coordinate this implementation process.*

## MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*Under the guidance and direction of the Director – Global Strategies and informed by the inputs of the KM Steering Committee (chaired by the Director - Global Strategies and comprising the Director - Global Programme and the Director - Global Operations), the KM*

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<sup>116</sup> External Review of IUCN, Commissions Review, Knowledge Management Study, Knowledge Products Study, Policy Influence Review.

<sup>117</sup> Governance Task Force, Bossey Report of Commission Chairs-Secretariat Retreat, Executive Management Group

*Special Adviser will manage the implementation of the Strategy in the six Strategic Areas of work by refining and coordinating the projects set out in the Strategy.*

*The KM Special Adviser will be a primary resource on KM and will champion the theory and practice of KM within IUCN. This will involve:*

### **[Theory -] Building KM Awareness and Engagement**

- *Demonstrating expertise in the field and related disciplines.*
- *Ensuring a clear understanding of knowledge generation/mobilisation processes and mechanisms, and the knowledge flows relevant to IUCN, as well as obstacles to their effectiveness.*
- *Demonstrating expertise and familiarity in the six Strategic Areas of the Strategy.*
- *Scanning the broader KM environment in order to keep abreast of new developments in the field.*
- *Promoting a clear understanding of the role of knowledge in the IUCN Programme and Policy priorities, the work of Global Strategies (particularly related to the knowledge objectives of the Membership Strategy and the IUCN Positioning statement), and in Global Operations in terms of integrated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platforms for learning and sharing across institutional boundaries.*

### **[Practice -] Achieving KM Results and Contributing to Outcomes**

- *Identifying and reporting on ‘disconnects’ and anomalies that hinder effective KM within IUCN and in the interface with its external environment, as well as obstacles to effective KM.*
- *Managing, coordinating and/or providing guidance to the teams who will implement pilot projects in the six Strategic Areas of work.*
- *Ensuring clear results in each of the six Strategic Areas.*
- *Ensuring the quality of the KM projects that are implemented, through regular monitoring and reporting on key performance indicators for KM.*
- *Contributing to the following outcomes:*
  - *Sustained collaboration among the IUCN leadership and managers in the Secretariat and the Commissions towards the shared KM vision as outlined in the Strategy.*
  - *An organizational culture widely acknowledged as promoting learning and knowledge sharing.*

- *Revised and improved processes and mechanisms that aim to secure the quality, relevance and usefulness of IUCN knowledge products and services, and increase their use and influence.*
- *Processes within IUCN that facilitate and encourage collaboration on knowledge products and services, enabling reasonably seamless knowledge flows across the current 'silos' within the organization.*
- *Improved management of IUCN's formal and informal knowledge networks aimed at maximising the influence of their knowledge products and services.*
- *Within resource constraints, critical and meaningful improvements in the data and information management (IT) as well as the communication systems to allow effective support of IUCN's KM strategies.*
- *IUCN acknowledged by other organizations as a leading organization in "innovative knowledge management for change".*

## REQUIREMENTS

- *(...) Considerable experience in the field of Knowledge Management or a related field (systems management, organizational development, etc).*
- *Proven level of expertise in ICT for KM, and ability to engage with IT professionals.*
- *Proven systems and lateral thinker able to build bridges among the various levels and units of IUCN and ability to engage effectively at both conceptual and practical levels.*
- *A solid understanding of IUCN globally, regionally and its Commissions.*
- *Clear conceptual and strategic thinking - understanding the big picture, the wider knowledge context and IUCN's strategy within it.*
- *(...)*

## 5.9 Present situation in terms of e-readiness

### 5.9.1 Information management vs. Communication Management at IUCN

IUCN established, in April 1996 by what is now the WCPA<sup>118</sup> Steering Committee, its Information Management Task Force (IMTF). The goal of the IMTF is:

**"To improve the way protected areas information is collected, managed, accessed, disseminated and applied".**

Recognising that there were significant disparities worldwide in access to Protected Areas information, resources, services and technologies, the IMTF was set up to pursue strategies

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<sup>118</sup> World Commission on Protected Areas

to correct that situation. The IMTF, which works in close cooperation with IMG<sup>119</sup>, is composed notably of WCPA members and others as appropriate, who provide both broad geographic representation and state-of-the-art expertise in information management.

The main objectives of the Task Force are:

*To review information and capacity building needs and the resources of the worldwide protected areas community, and to outline tools and guidelines to address identified needs;*

- 1. To produce a fully developed Protected Areas Resource Centre (PARC) proposal which is both modular and phased in design, and act as an advisory body for its implementation;*
- 2. To insure effective WCPA input to the Biodiversity Conservation Information System (BCIS) Programme;*
- 3. To provide advice to WCMC and WCPA to improve the way protected areas information is collected, managed, accessed, disseminated and applied;*
- 4. To seek and secure funding for WCPA information management projects with priority being given to PARC; and*
- 5. To undertake other tasks in the area of protected area information management at the request of the WCPA Steering Committee.*

## **5.10 Conclusion on Observations**

In order to conclude this partial observation of IUCN as a ‘model’ NGO, I wish to remind that IUCN is a very important NGO in terms of budget or size. It is not a citizen’s NGO but otherwise it bears all the classical characteristics of NGOs. Its openness brought me the invaluable advantage of being able to observe it from outside the organisation. As IUCN managers happen to read this text, they may find errors or inaccuracies, but this may help them to look back at their web site and check.

I add an organisation chart of IUCN composed from the available web data. We might be interested to seek for the communication managers in that chart once we know the Information is the raw material on which IUCN builds its reputation and *raison d’être*.

This concludes my findings and observations.

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<sup>119</sup> See § 5.8.1 above

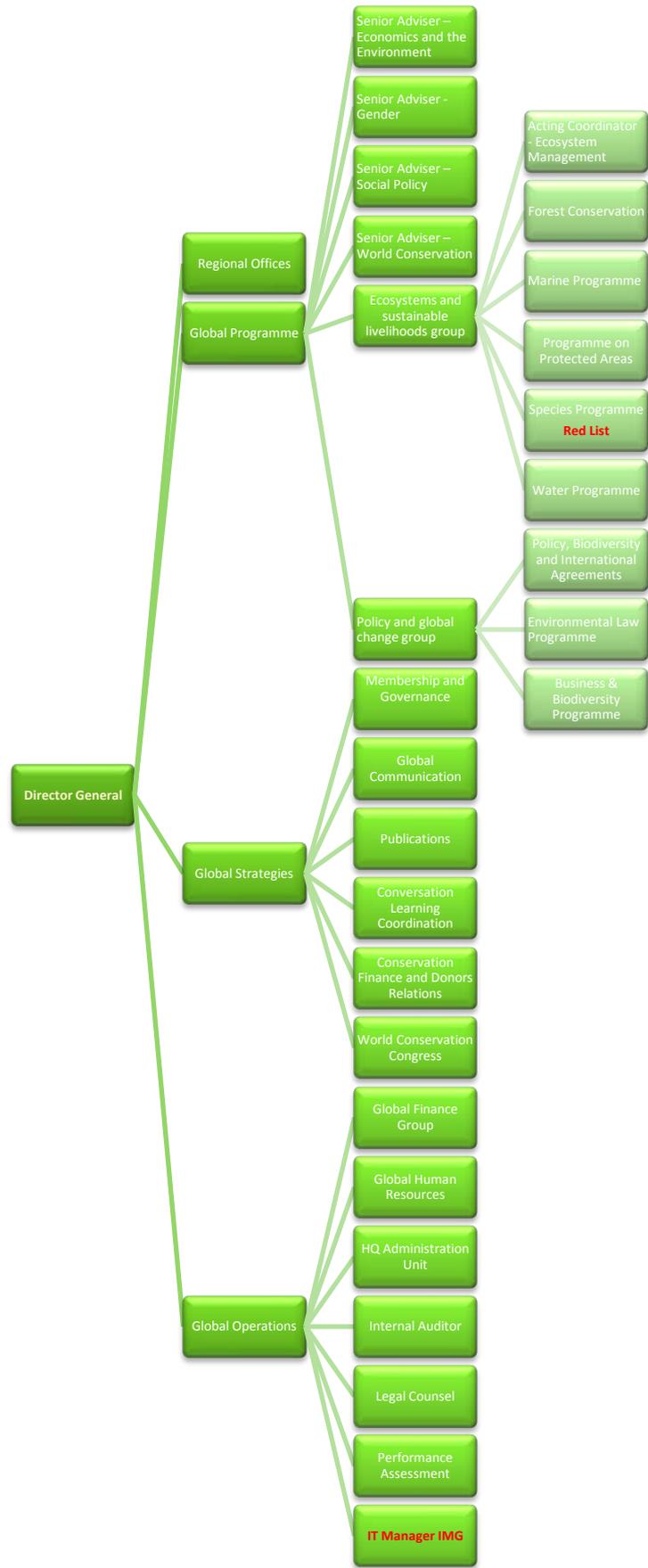


Figure 26 - Organisation chart of IUCN

## 6 ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE AND FINDINGS

### 6.1 Questions raised in the thesis

We explored in the introduction the transformation of State in the direction of e-Governance. We discovered that Civil Society which is also a very important economic sector behaves largely unaware of this trend despite the inter-relations it keeps up with State. In exploring the fields of Civil Society, we discovered that it was defined diversely, both in time and in space, though the concept is widely used especially by international organisations but also in the sphere of State. A similar situation affects NGOs, but as they have a substance and structures, government are in a better position to control them. We wondered whether NGOs should consider a similar transformation of their social status. Theories of change and theories of organisation, that are still used though they were mostly inspired and designed for the industrial era, are no longer suitable in the Informatization and Networked era because they are static and because of the changes that occurred with the physical means of communication. Virtual communities, ‘Web 2.0’ initiatives are the most visible expression of the effect of these changes. They daily demonstrate horizontality, flexibility and dynamism in organisations. Of course contemporary vertical structures know horizontality, but still within the pyramid of organisation. However, there is a paradigmatic change in the organic reality of today’s Information Society that still has to make its path in the mind of managers, even in Civil Society when it is structured. I shall concentrate here to some of the important issues I identified at the light of my findings, first to the inclusion of the Civil Society in the debate on State e-Governance and second to the own e-Governance of Civil Society with a special focus on communication.

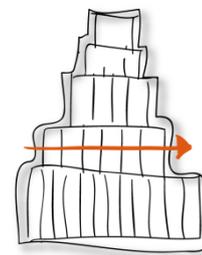


Figure 27 - This is not horizontality

#### 6.1.1 Civil Society in e-Governance

The NGOs – the Civil Society – should indeed participate in the debate for a better e-governance of their country and should join and organize the pressure exerted by the citizens without leaving this debate to civil servants, to professional parliament members or to sectoral interests of the private sector. It is a question of survival as we have seen above. However, to intervene legitimately, NGOs should first be clear about their own identity. We have seen in effect the difficulties that the different stakeholders have in agreeing with the definitions linked to the concepts of Civil Society/ NGO because of the reflect of the image they give both outside and inside – and because of the place they take in the society. Busy NGO managers often reacting to day-to-day business tend to become short-sighted, short-term strategies contribute to blur further the vision. Actually, we observed above that NGOs do carry an image of socially and politically oriented organisations aiming at providing assistance to minorities. Globalization and modernity are their indicated enemies. Many NGOs tend to stick in a socialist-ecological-Third Worldist ghetto. States, according to the NGOs, have to correct and adjust their action to solve current globalization and modernity issues, and what happens? States reacts by implementing eGovernance, by interacting more closely with their citizens. States globally master communication like no one else and make efforts to absorb or reduce the social movements that contributed to the creation of NGOs. There are concrete demonstrations on how the States succeed in integrating the civil society, like for example as a partner in Public Private Partnerships. States now use effectively third par-

ties like the NGOs to carry out some of their functions, better, cheaper, more flexibly or even in disguise.

Still man is kept off the centre of the reflection. It is said sometimes and I agree that ICT promoted the ‘individuation’ of Society but we observed that State by increasing its grip on information and gaining expertise in processing huge amount of data tends to control the life of individuals more and more closely. This is an interesting contradiction. Governmental institutions, while moving from eGovernment to eGovernance, pretend to give the citizen a more participative power in decisions. It is not an attempt to ‘horizontalize’ their organisation in a networked society but rather another attempt to decrease the power of the Civil Society. The trend to isolate individuals in a cocoon of easy interconnectivity but increased surveillance, thus depriving people of their critical eye on what happens to them, is reinforced in the ‘Ubiquitous Society’ to come. Civil Society cannot really answer to the State on the same ground, but as it is smaller – even the biggest NGOs are smaller than the smallest States – it could be more flexible and more active in the field of its own e-Governance. ICT and Networked enabled, horizontal structures may help in that case. Nevertheless, things happen differently in the Civil Society arena.

Because of the ICT Revolution and because of the pressure exerted on State to develop better e-Governance, the Civil Society is now dragged in a silent and so far invisible struggle for survival with the State. State acts but most NGO remain away from the debate.

At the higher levels – either from a financial or from an international perspective – the relations between international NGOs and governments become even much more complex. International organisations that emerged of the civil society, like the IUCN for example, despite their declarations – an effect of their communication – are near to lose their connections with the civil society. This happens because of their size, because they are financially dependent from governments for their subsistence, because they existed for so long and/or because they are organized so vertically that their structure became over the years a reason not necessary but sufficient for their existence. This opposes indeed to horizontal organisations that are supposed to consume only the resources to accomplish a certain task and disappear once the results achieved. An organisation like the IUCN, that has global objectives that were never really at reach in the modern history and that became more and more difficult to reach, may wonder how it could use horizontal structures in this case. It suffices to think back with Markram (MARKRAM, 2006) on how human brain is achieving new tasks by building connections on purpose to get inspired.

It is also true that international NGO rely on local or national agencies. Those must have kept contact with the population. The IUCN is an example; it needs citizens to exert pressure on their government either to become a member of IUCN or to change somewhat their environmental policies. IUCN faces the classical dilemma of being global but away from the base or being local but with no real power on States. I still wonder whether the IUCN resolved this dilemma or not, and I suppose that very likely the IUCN has the same interrogation. The solution goes through transformation. According to its declarations, IUCN masters change management. I suggest it to pay attention first to the contradictions that speckle its communication about Civil Society and second to its implication in the discussions between both Civil Society and State about e-Governance. A horizontal structure, eventually inspired by social psychology, including in a federation of IUCN non-governmental organisations, might really bring closer all its members, give them a sense of belonging to the same group, a family of organisations that effectively protect the environment. The feeling of belonging to the IUCN’s ‘winning team’ could in effect make it more efficient and more powerful.

### 6.1.2 E-Governance of Civil Society

The ICT Revolution builds a network of power, and very clearly, those that do not belong to this network are left aside. In a world where commerce became eCommerce, in a world where government became eGovernment, the NGOs make the choice of immobilism. However, the Civil Society will not escape the debate on its own good electronic governance. Problems related to the Digital Divide, resistance and difficulties to perceive changes occurring so fast, refusal of the idea that the technological determinism does act as an engine of social changes, all of this hamper their move in the debate. Immobilism seems therefore the easiest policy. Nevertheless, we know it is not true.

NGO are not sufficiently aware of their situation in the e-World. It is true that some of them have somewhat digitized their administrative processes but we have largely seen above that the question is not whether they can use computers but rather how they integrate in the Network in the sense of Castells. We are not talking about NGO e-Government but really NGO e-Governance. I suspect however that they miss the expertise or lack time and/or resources to develop e-governance project. In addition, very little help is available outside of concepts of community of practice and knowledge management. Stakes are complex and the private sector is generally not a useful model. The whole discussion about Knowledge Management at IUCN is to my opinion an interesting example of traps that business consulting may put on the path to an NGO's e-Governance, to e-NGO.

Moving to e-Governance supposes also changing the structures of the organisation. Communication always played a crucial role in organisations, even traditional ones. I note with Mintzberg that it is through communication that activities can be coordinated in a structure. As long as communication is slow and interaction one to one based, organisations are static constructions. We noted that ICTs and Internet transform communication and information management in such a tremendous manner that it became fast and ubiquitous. Coordination and controlling are becoming more dynamic, the life expectancy of information shorter and this incite organisations not only to become horizontal to accelerate the diffusion of information but also to try to benefit from the power of networks to enable the participation of mass of voluntary people to assist in the resolution of particular problems. That does not mean however that a vertical organisation has the necessary and sufficient abilities in itself to change its organisation from vertical to horizontal. The complexity of stakes envisioned here is susceptible of discouraging an NGO to initiate even a feasibility study.

Conflicts of interest are as frequent in vertical organisation as lack of coercive management is part of horizontal ones. The latter is prone to affect horizontal organisations, therefore **accountability**, to be understood clearly, as the expression of the fairness that the NGO uses towards its members, sponsors and beneficiaries, is an ingredient that is essential in NGOs' governance.

### 6.1.3 Structures of e-NGO

We learnt, notably from Castells, that ICT and economy form a virtuous circle of mutual interdependencies where ICT enabled the business to become more efficient, which in return induced further enhancements of ICT. This virtuous circle dragged along the penetration of ICT in the households and eventually in government administrations. We believed that e-Government was simply a translation of ICT business processes into ICT administrative processes of governments. A new branch of ICT emerged to answer the demand of the part of State, which in return promoted further development of ICT in a parallel virtuous eGov

circle. However, we know now that the civil society cannot enable a third virtuous circle of its own, essentially because Civil Society does not exist in the sense that it has no identity. On one hand, business organisations answer to a logic of markets, which is normally and effectively not that of NGOs. On another hand, governments, though their members are normally elected, are one of the strongest existing vertical organisations. What's more, they have normally this legitimate monopoly on their territory. This is obviously how States are made. However, we have to realize that an NGO cannot really compare neither to a commercial venture nor to a government in term of structures. NGOs have members and beneficiaries that may be the same or different persons. NGOs also have 'markets', but they are separated with for example one for the beneficiaries and another one for the sponsors. Because of their social nature, NGOs are candidates to horizontal organisations. Of course, horizontality and monopoly are not compatible one with the other. This raises in particular the question of the extinction of NGOs monopoly on some aspects of the social problems. NGOs can no longer pretend to monopoly, even 'governmental' NGOs, even international NGOs. The International Committee of the Red Cross has 'competition' now though it exists for 144 years, out of which at least more than 100 years it acted alone. As useful as an NGO appears to a government, it can be replaced any time by new organisations; the trend accelerates in the networked society and event based communication. The demand for market freedom that followed globalisation is the major cause of it. The structure of an e-NGO is therefore original as it interfaces to 'markets' to provide on the first one – the sponsors – intangibles services and on the second one – the beneficiaries – social services. It interfaces with the State as an information provider or in a Public Private Partnership, but also in some occasion as a justiciable or a tax payer and it interfaces with Civil Society for its social responsibility and accountability.

Internet and specially 'Web2.0' applications still appear as a space reserved for specialists, a new world that does not open easily to the ordinary people, a world where huge fortunes are created and destroyed in very short periods. The discussion on the digital divide teaches us that the reasons for but also the effects of this divide are multiple. As a further example of digital divide, I observe that, in the case of NGO holding this very particular position in the society, no particular efforts were made by the ICT industry to address that market. However, the structures of e-NGO shall have to be created out of existing ICT and Internet solutions developed to businesses, manufactures, services industries and governmental agencies. This is of course an additional problem to solve.

#### **6.1.4 Communication of e-NGO**

Everybody talks about Communication. We have seen with Neveu how complex and multi-faceted it is, we have also seen how crucial communication can be in a networked environment; it can make or destroy business more efficiently than anything else does. For an NGO in particular, which relies on external donors to survive, a good communication is much more important than good and efficient structures. E-NGO in this respect needs to emphasize first on communication. I was tempted to add symmetrical communication but I hope that my plea for horizontality contributed to make this point fully clear and obvious. IUCN has, under the department of Global Strategies, an office for Global Communication, which is a rather good position for such an office. However, taking into account the importance IUCN correctly places on Information, I would personally have recommended placing the department of Global Communication directly attached to the General Director.

The ICT Revolution dragged us in the Information or Communication Society which means in particular that prospective users of our information, who receive in parallel more and more information, are about to request assistance to sort out what interest them. Otherwise, like the politicians of Neveu, the NGOs will also become obliged to indulge themselves to gesticulations to arouse listening.

E-Governance in e-NGO will also bring transparency and accountability to the Civil Society. This, brought along with better communication, will change the references of the public and consequently the relations between State and the citizens. In a first approach above, I suspected that State empowered by e-Governance would slowly absorb the Civil Society as it defines itself today. We have seen that with a clever use of ICT, networked based communication and the new social structures that emerged from the ICT Revolution, Civil Society might resist and even gain. Civil Society has the advantage of proximity, flexibility and reactivity and can base its communication on these factors. But State with the means of e-Government also aims at proximity with the ubiquitous society, flexibility with a networked based organisation and reactivity to change thanks to the high level of information it is the only one able to gather, possesses and process.

None withstanding of their field of activity, the future reflection of NGOs shall take into account their existing types, who created it, why, with whom, for whom do they act, do they take their decision democratically, for the development of their e-Structures. The e-Structure of an NGO shall also be based naturally on its operational needs. For example, an NGO acting as a special interest group shall carefully plan and implement the use of interactive and managed web site.

In her paper, Suraud asked mainly two questions: First one, does the Internet prove able to enhance the political public debate. Secondly, what is the impact of Internet on the interface between the civil society and the government? Her answer was pessimistic, but she identified nevertheless a key element for success that we shall keep in mind: the 'federator' that plays an essential role in horizontal e-NGO.

I do hope that this image looks good and correct and that it reflects the reality of NGOs. It will thus enable the Civil Society to enter in the Informatization Age, to adapt to the changes and to preserve or increase its efficiency. How it fits with IUCN's vision, both inside and outside is my next point.

## 6.2 Situation of IUCN in the Civil Society

We know how difficult it is to define terms in the Civil Society arena. We observed that the unique common point of entities claiming their membership to the Civil Society is their grouping of people sharing common concerns. I found without surprise no indication in IUCN's communication on how it understands the signification of Civil Society. The UNEP, a close associate, is in the same position as we saw at § 3.2.2 above. **IUCN is a union, it is a network, it is a federator. In essence, it is a creator of horizontality.** IUCN defines itself by its mission (The Union's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable) and this mission as it translates in actions tends to create verticality. In effect, IUCN needs its network – notably of NGOs – to build knowledge, it needs its scientists to build trust and it needs the Civil Society as a voice to relay its own one. However, it needs above all States, as they are its prime members. All

this together draws a complex, vertical and closed picture that makes communication extremely difficult. In short, who does the IUCN belongs to?

### 6.3 Communication challenges to IUCN

We have also seen that Information is the raw material of IUCN. Its process makes transform IUCN's vision into mission by the means of communication. In fulfilling its mission, IUCN faces different challenges of communication caused by its vast audience and diversity of members on both providers and users ends of the communication channels; it has to ensure the **scientific character, reputation, integrity and transparency** of the information delivered which is the 'trade mark' of IUCN.

As it intends to utilise scientific information to build knowledge and to transform the latter into policy and guidance to influence environment governance by influencing people, governments and international organisations, it has to 'localize' the information to make it corresponding to the 'local' culture; it has of course to ensure the distinction between scientific information and advocacy. Finally, it has to make the delivered information acceptable by the recipient in order to make it fit for purpose. This is just about the scientific communication. Nevertheless, IUCN is not just a scientific organization. It has a mission too in the Civil Society that is guided by the Union's strategy. We shall see the place I suggest in the organisation chart for the Chief Information Officer (CIO) below.

Governments are composed of politicians that normally decide after carefully weighting – sometimes-personal – interests, risks and benefits of their policies on their country, their party and themselves. In order to decide for a change in a direction favourable to the objectives of IUCN, they will reflect in a context of multi-stakeholders' interests. Without a clear pressure from the part of the Civil Society<sup>120</sup>, influent political parties and special interest groups, the '**Tragedy of Commons**' (OSTROM, 1990) might well strike again. This is certainly the greatest challenge in the communication of IUCN outside its scientific sphere.

### 6.4 IUCN's e-Governance in a networked society

IUCN presents itself as a network; it should therefore be at ease in the Networked Society. Who are the members of its network? They are governments and governmental agencies, NGOs, both national and international and 'affiliates'. All IUCN's members, to very few exceptions, have a web site; they are consequently part of the networked society. In effect, these 800 or so web sites form an interesting network of colourful presentations of Nature, competing for sponsors and for attention. Nevertheless, less than 57 of national NGO link their web site to IUCN's. The figure is better for international NGOs. The network would probably gain in efficiency with a better joint e-Governance of these NGOs together.

I suspect that some governments smile to Civil Society despite the fact it is a stone in their shoes. IUCN is a particular example of this conflicting position. Most of its funding comes from governments but the majority of IUCN's efforts are directed ultimately at governments. IUCN does it either alone or with local organisations that governments do not necessarily appreciate. IUCN takes thus the risk of being suspected to bite the hand that nourishes it, especially in contexts where economic interests conflict with environmental interests.

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<sup>120</sup> To see an example of communication intended to raise awareness in the public, refer to: (<http://www.oneearth.org/>)

However, IUCN is a strong organisation, used to negotiate balanced compromises. It was created in 1948 (HOLDGATE, 1999) and still exists with a successful record of accomplishment. Nevertheless, the Society is changing as we all know well and this balance might alter. The IUCN needs to enhance its communication with the population in general and with the Civil Society in particular. The State wishes to neutralize the Civil Society by neutralizing its communication. When Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and former IUCN Director General imagines that accountability is a weapon to put in the hands of the Civil Society to claim more from the State, he never imagines that IUCN could become accountable of its acts to the population and therefore is suspect of acting short-sightedly. IUCN has to be very careful in preserving its major source of financing and PPP in this respect is a clever path to explore. Naturally of course, only a financially stronger IUCN that masters the new means of communication in a networked society can talk equal to equal to governments. We know now that new means of communication that bring power are based on networked horizontal structures.

## **6.5 How should an NGO behave to adapt itself to a changing governmental environment?**

The modest indications below, aiming only at this part of the organisation that is concerned by the Information Society, is probably a good start:

### **6.5.1 Basis for the List of duty of the CIO**

The Chief Information Officer (CIO) should find his/her place at the second highest position in the present time organisation. Of course, one should not mix this position with that of a Chief Technical Officer (CTO) or whatever name you give to the person in charge of the ICT. The CIO is neither the web master nor the LAN manager even less the Telecom manager. Those are technical functions and bear the same sort of responsibility as a chief-accountant for example. The CTO is not in charge of strategy design. Look back at § 5.8.1 to find out in the requested list of duty what makes a CIO and what makes a CTO.

The CIO, in an organisation like the IUCN which has Information Processing as its core business, is involved in strategy and communication planning, in the design of the service delivery channels and finally in the design of interfaces. Figure 28 - Communication and Information channels below shows a raw picture of this.



Figure 28 - Communication and Information channels

The strategy in the figure above aims at translating the vision/mission in actions; Porter's five forces model<sup>121</sup> might inspire it. It will be completed by a serious analysis of the NGO's identity. The strategy is linked to the Communication through a series of fundamental questions. It is also linked through a set of interfaces with the usual partners, one of them – State – benefiting in addition from the unique quality of NGOs regarding their ability to inform. The more value the NGO adds to the information, the more valuable it will appear to State.

Communication is nothing without Strategy, but in return, the NGO is nothing without Communication. It aims at beneficiaries, members, sponsors, state, other NGOs, the public in general through the Web. Experts and competitors will assist or influence it. Finally, the global NGO will benefit from a networked horizontal structure not only for its communication but also for enriching its knowledge by federating partners NGOs, other Civil Society entities or virtual communities. The plan behind federated communication and coordinated action is to empower the network of e-NGOs and make it a powerful knight of Civil Society.

<sup>121</sup> See Matthias Finger's presentation : *Industry analysis: industry change and role of the ICTs* given 07/10/2006 at EPFL's eGov classes in Lausanne for more details

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 Conclusions and lessons learnt

The real power of the Information Society, which will eventually be born from smart implementation of e-Governance, lies in its ability to rethink the relation between individuals inside new forms of organisation that seemed unthinkable until now. What is really changing under our eyes now is the ability of each individual, standing at the centre of the network, to communicate, actively or passively, with all others, wherever they are, at anytime, anywhere and for any purpose. It is a viable alternative to the Ubiquitous Society. In effect, the latter will end up to isolate the individuals by providing them goods or services they do not even need to ask. Good e-Governance is meant for *Better Government* and for a *Harmonious Society*. We have seen the various meaning governments give to these terms. However, what we have observed is what they have in common; all place the man in the centre of attention. Let good e-Governance make man responsible of his environment, be it social, natural or economic.

The lesson to learn from this study is that obviously change will happen through implementation of government e-Governance. However, vertical institutions are neither suitable to accept this change nor are they ready to. They grew so high and the horizon seems so far away to them that most will not be able to see change happening right around them, at their feet. Again, change will carry along new structures and let us remember that horizontal organisations are made of fast and flexible connections built and destroyed on purpose.

### 7.2 Recommendations for future action

Realizing that it took a complete one-year executive master set of sessions to approach and study the electronic governance of State, anyone will understand that the work presented here is finally only a simple introduction to the subject of electronic governance of the Civil Society. Nevertheless, the topic deserved this minimal treatment. In effect Civil Society as I had many occasion to remark is and has to remain an essential part of our society not only for the services provided but even more for their role in the control of State and for the creativity they bring in the reflections on our future.

Finally, I acknowledge that this research is theoretical and lacks of practical verifications. I wished I could have discussed this with the IUCN and others NGOs in different fields but I could not, mainly for time related constraints. I read a lot, not only the references mentioned below, but also magazines and newspapers and found some verification in these readings as well, but eventually there are still assumptions above that were not checked and, as an engineer, I perfectly know that any assumption that you do not check twice at least may prove false and harm your projects. I hope now that I shall be able to convince NGOs out there to consider favourably my findings and to have me working with them for first or additional verification and real life implementation of the ideas expressed above.

### 7.3 Acknowledgements

First, I wish to thank the IUCN for its voluntary but also for its involuntary collaboration. IUCN's web site is very informative. Without the important work that was done upstream by the IUCN, by observations would have been even more partial.

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Vevey, 22 August 2007

Jacques Gamboni

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