United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Communication and Information:
Towards a Prospective Research Agenda

Report on a Workshop, UNESCO, Paris, 20-21 December 2007

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1. Aim of the Workshop

1. UNESCO invited the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) to collaborate in convening a workshop at its headquarters in Paris to elaborate a policy-relevant research agenda which can serve as a framework for the elaboration of specific research projects. The research framework developed by participants in the workshop highlights key areas where scholarly work is needed to inform policy directions in areas addressed by UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector (See Appendix 1 for a list of participants).

2. UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector is the lead sector for knowledge societies with inputs from other Sectors including Education, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Culture. The Communication and Information Sector is engaged in capacity building, it serves as a laboratory of ideas and as a standard setter for research aimed at building inclusive knowledge societies. The mandate of UNESCO Communication and Information programme is 'to promote the free flow of information and ideas; to encourage the creation of diversified contents; to facilitate equitable access to information and to the means of sharing knowledge as well as capacity building in communication and information'.

3. More specifically during the last decade, UNESCO in communication and information area supported progressive research agenda in communication and information such as exchanges of specialised information, creation, preservation and dissemination of knowledge. In 2001, UNESCO organised a consultation on communication and information technology research at the Centre for Mass Communication Research, University of Leicester, United Kingdom, 4-5 December 2001. The discussion was organized around the following four main themes: i) the World Summit on the Information Society; ii) media, dialogue and peace; iii) community communication and information structures; and iv) information and communication technologies and education for all. As the outcome of the Leicester consultation, a series of research reports was commissioned and distributed during the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in 2005.[1]

4. In addition, UNESCO was proposed to act as a "catalyst of networks and partnerships", facilitating research through partnerships with the academic and research communities. Its initiatives since the Summit include those in the following areas:

- Access to information and knowledge
- E-Learning

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[1] These research reports addressed: Infoethics and universal access to information and knowledge; linguistic and cultural diversity in media and information networks; ICTs and people with disabilities; gender and ICTs; press freedom and freedom of expression in the information society; and education and training in and for the information society.

- E-science
- Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- Media
- Ethical dimensions of the Information society, and
- Thee development of a model curriculum for journalism and education in Africa in 2007.[2]

5.   Other exchanges between UNESCO and IAMCR have included a roundtable convened at the 2002 IAMCR conference in Barcelona to discuss priority areas for research, especially in areas such as international governance, ethical social and legal issues; and the implications of convergent information and communication technologies. UNESCO, in collaboration with International Development Research Centre (IDCR) and University of Philippine, organized a meeting on participatory development communication research in Los Banos, 26-27 April 2004.

6.   UNESCO supported the participation of young researches from developing countries at the 24th International Conference and General Assembly of IAMCR held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 25-30 July 2004. As part of UNESCO's follow-up to its participation in the 2003 and 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the organisation is working to coordinate and collaborate with civil society organisations and has established more than 400 partnerships with the private sector.

7.   UNESCO has also established collaborations with the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) and other organisations including the Asia Media, Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) and through its links with UNESCO offices regionally.

8.   All these initiatives by UNESCO have been designed to ensure that the main beneficiaries are the international community of researchers and scholars working in the communication and information domain as well as those who can benefit from a wide range of policy related research outputs.

9.   The International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) has a membership that is drawn from all regions of the world. One of its aims is "to encourage the development of research and systematic study, especially in areas of media production, transmission and reception, in the contexts in which these activities take place and in those subjects and areas where such work is not well developed" (IAMCR Statutes 2.2).

10. The research framework described in this report of the workshop is intended to indicate lines of research that should receive a high priority in the period covered by UNESCO's Medium-term Strategy 2008 – 2013 (Document 34 C/4). [3] The strategy is to be implemented within the framework of the three biennial programmes and budgets covered by this period. [4]

11. UNESCO's 2008-2013 Medium-Term Strategy in the area of Communication and Information has as overarching objective to build "inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication".

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[2] For a review of journalism education institutions in Africa, see Berger, G and Matras, C. (2007) 'Criteria and Indicators for Quality Journalism Training Institutions & Identifying Potential Centres of Excellence in Journalism Training in Africa', Paris: UNESCO.

[3] Modified in document 34 C/11 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001514/151453e.pdf.

[4] UNESCO (2008) *Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013,* 34 C/4 at http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001499/149999e.pdf; 35 C/5 (2010-2011; not yet available) and 35 C/5 (20012-2013; not yet available).

12. Under this overarching objective, there are two strategic programme objectives, namely:

    i)   Enhancing universal access to information and knowledge; and

    ii)   Fostering pluralistic, free and independent media and infostructures

13. The expected results of these objectives are the following:

    i)   Identification of key parameters of an enabling environment for knowledge creation, preservation, access and sharing and their availability to governments,

    ii)   Integration of policies and frameworks pertaining to access to information and knowledge in all of UNESCO's field of competence into United Nations common country level programming exercises; and

    iii) Establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships to foster access to and the free flow of information and knowledge, in line with WSIS outcomes.

14. Within this six year strategic framework, the Communication and Information Sector works in the biennium 2008-2009 along the following four "Main Lines of Action":

    i)   Promoting an enabling environment for freedom of expression and freedom of information;

    ii)   Fostering universal access to information and the development of infostructures, including preservation of information;

    iii) Promoting development of free, independent and pluralistic media and community participation in sustainable development through community media;

    iv) Strengthening the role of communication and information in fostering mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation, particularly in conflict- and post-conflict areas.

15. IAMCR is well-positioned to address these themes and issue areas as its sections and working groups cover all these aspects of research in the media and communications field of study. UNESCO's strategy and its main lines of action overlap considerably with IAMCR areas of expertise.

16. The aim of the workshop was to develop a forward-looking research framework that can guide UNESCO's efforts to commission research that will help to provide critical assessments of developments in the communication and information field. As inequalities of many kinds persist in today's knowledge societies at the local, national and global levels, the research framework outlined in this report is intended to encourage research that will yield insights for all those involved in shaping international policy agendas in the communication and information field and for those engaged in practical projects involving information and communication and related technologies within countries.

17. Workshop participants were encouraged to be selective in their choice of research issues and topics. It was also recognised that the strengths and weaknesses of the research base differs enormously in different countries and regions of the world. The research framework outlined in this report is intended to be inclusive and to encourage the development of diverse theoretical perspectives. It is also intended to foster the use of a wide range of research methodologies. The

research framework is summarised in Appendix 2 and is explained in detail in the following section. [5]

2. Research Framework for Knowledge Societies

18. UNESCO's 2005 World Report *Towards Knowledge Societies* highlights the context in which a research framework for the Communication and Information Sector needs to operate. The introduction of the report emphasises the plurality of knowledge societies both historically and in the communication and information environments of today.

> "Does the aim of building knowledge societies make any sense when history and anthropology teach us that since ancient times, all societies have probably been each in its own way, knowledge societies? …

> The current spread of new technologies and the emergence of the internet as a public network seem to be carving out fresh opportunities to widen this public knowledge forum. Might we now have the means to achieve equal and universal access to knowledge, and genuine sharing? This should be the cornerstone of true knowledge societies, which are a source of human and sustainable development. ..

> The idea of the information society is based on technological breakthroughs. The concept of knowledge societies encompasses much broader social, ethical and political dimensions. *There is a multitude of such dimensions which rules out the idea of any single, ready-made model*, for such a model would not take sufficient account of cultural and linguistic diversity, vital if individuals are to feel at home in a changing world." (emphasis added)[6]

19. Research commissioned by UNESCO must respect the diversity of knowledge societies without imposing a singular model or set of expectations with respect to how older and newer information and communication technologies should become embedded in people's lives. The highest priority for a research framework to guide future research is that it should mobilise research that challenges dominant paradigms that envisage the emergence of a homogeneous knowledge society. It is essential to ensure that renewed emphasis is given to research which challenges and critiques values of all kinds in order to redress the imbalance created by the substantial attention given to research on technology itself and on a relatively narrow set of market-led values. In order to achieve this, the framework must foster a:

> ### Rethinking of sustainable development in the context of knowledge societies

20. A rethinking or re-imagining of societies as fostering enabling communication and information environments that contribute to greater efficacy, social justice, and well-being is essential to the sustainability of knowledge societies.

21. Workshop participants discussed the legitimacy of retaining the term 'development'. It was suggested by some that this terminology should be abandoned

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[5] The workshop was chaired by Dr. Robin Mansell, President IAMCR and Professor of New Media and the Internet, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science. This report reflects the combined contributions of workshop participants who commented on an earlier draft, and contributions by email by members of IAMCR. However, the perspectives outlined here remain those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of any institution or organisation.

[6] See UNESCO (2005) *Towards Knowledge Societies,* p. 17, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001418/141843e.pdf.

because of its association with policies and practices that envisage a progressive movement towards a singular 'western' social and economic order. This is an important debate and one that is ongoing within the wider community of researchers concerned with poverty eradication.[7]

22. The use of the term 'sustainable development' was agreed as a means of signalling a departure from an uncritical stance with respect to the implications of strategies involving communication and information and their related technologies. Importantly, it was acknowledged that there is a need for dialogue aimed at encouraging translations between different meanings and interpretations of the goals that should mobilise action on the part of stakeholders in different locations. Translation in this context refers to the need for researchers to:

> "engage in, and try to connect to, knowledge formations and vocabularies that reside in other modernities and other temporalities that are either refused recognition, or are not adequately translated, in machines of knowledge production".[8]

23. In particular, there is a need to encourage indigenous theory building and models using a variety of languages.

24. There has been substantial critical analysis and discussion of the relationship between media, communication and development since the early work of Quebral in the 1970s.[9] However, the mainstream paradigm for research in this area today has shifted towards 'social marketing' rather than towards a fundamental concern for the 'power of peace' and tolerance. Understanding the role of communication and information in fostering mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation requires support for the development of others, cross–cultural diversity and knowledge acquisition and sharing. Information and communication technologies and the mediated system as a whole need to be examined critically. An **alternative** research framework is needed that can facilitate debate about the values that should be at the core of initiatives to build knowledge societies. It should contribute to debates that are inclusive and aimed at discovery of the common interests of all stakeholders including civil society, entrepreneurs and governments.

25. At very least there is a need for a reopening of development debates in a way that acknowledges that values are at stake and that people need to be empowered to make choices with respect to how their knowledge societies should be organised.[10] Amartya Sen's work offers a starting point for an alternative framework for research in this area. Sen's interest is in people's functioning, where 'functioning' is understood as 'an achievement of a person: what he or she manages to do or to be'.[11] Functionings are related to capabilities and freedoms as, for example, in the freedom to access resources that contribute to well-being. Such freedoms are also closely associated with human rights and ethical conduct. Following Sen, a research

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[7] See for example, the discussion in *Reinventing Development Research*, *IDS Bulletin*, 2007, Volume 38, No. 2.

[8] See Shome, R., (2006) 'Interdisciplinary Research and Globalization', *The Communication Review*, 9: 1-36, p. 3.

[9] See Quebral, N. 1975. Development communication, in Jamias, J., (ed) *Readings in development communication,* Laguna: UPLB College of Agriculture, pp. 1-11.

[10] For a comprehensive review of research traditions in the area of communication and media 'for development', see Manyozo, L. (2007) 'Communication for Development: An Historical Overview', report prepared for UNESCO and the IAMCR 50th Anniversary Conference, July, Paris, forthcoming as online publication in 2008.

[11] Sen, A. (1999) *Commodities and Capabilities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 7.

framework for the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO should emphasise investigation of the multiple ways in which knowledge societies may be contributing to the achievements of human beings.

26. Research is needed that can help to inform all stakeholders in knowledge societies about the ways in which varying combinations of information and communication relationships in local and global contexts can contribute to sustainable development. This is the context in which measures are needed to promote an enabling environment for freedom of expression and freedom of information and the other main lines of UNESCO's strategy. The uneven characteristics of knowledge societies and the relationship between their development and the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must be taken into account.[12] There must be a departure from perspectives that envisage a linear, technology-driven approach to the issues of concern.

27. The media historically have been understood to play an important role in all countries and especially in contexts where poverty eradication is the goal. This role has been emphasised particularly in connection with efforts to promote freedom of expression. Today, not only is there a proliferation of media platforms, but there are a great many more producers and co-producers of news and entertainment content. Thus the focus of the research framework must extend beyond professional journalists to all those who seek to have a potentially empowering voice in society. As UNESCO points out:

> "One of the most important political and social benefits that freedom of expression confers is the potential for empowerment. It is this that offers the greatest and most far-reaching tool for eradicating poverty because it makes people aware they have rights. As such, they cannot be marginalized or excluded. They have the right to be heard and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives".[13]

28. In the light of these considerations, the research questions of central concern are the following:

> ***What new concepts are required to acknowledge difference and the distinctiveness of today's knowledge societies with respect to issues of: a) governance, b) cultural diversity and c) media/infostructure education?***

> ***What evidence is there of effective learning in each of these areas on the part of different stakeholders?***

29. Governance, inclusive of all stakeholders, is an essential component of the processes and structures through which knowledge societies emerge, cultural diversity is inherent in the recognition of the plurality and variety of knowledge societies, and education and learning are the means through which the media and complex infostructures can contribute to human well-being. Improved understanding through research of the dynamics of each of these three components is essential to underpin and inform UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector Strategy.

30. Research undertaken to address these questions should be informed by a consideration of, and sensitivity to, ***Communication, Culture and Context – 3Cs***, acknowledging that communicative environments of all kinds – ranging from interpersonal family relationships to large groups and organisations are mediated by

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[12] See UNESCO (ed) (2006) *Media Development and Poverty Eradication*, UNESCO.

[13] Khan, A W (2006) 'What UNECO is doing to Support Freedom of Expression', in UNESCO (ed) (2006) *Media Development and Poverty Eradication*, UNESCO, p. 10.

older and newer information and technologies in many different ways. In a world in which there is a tendency towards atomised individuals and fragmentation, a major issue is to understand the potentials for new communities and civil society actions to emerge within mediated environments. It is also essential for all stakeholders to be aware of the values that are being incorporated within existing and new communities and the consequences for inter-cultural expression. These considerations should be at the core of the research framework.

31. Understanding the implications of diverse media, communication and information relationships requires attention to culturally specific contexts. This is as much the case with respect to governance processes and institutions as it is with respect to measures to enhance or protect cultural diversity; and actions to foster media and infostructures, more generally, that respect human rights through a wide variety of education measures.[14] Research needs to embrace cross-cultural studies, to acknowledge the differences in the framings of issues and to assess how values inform specific norms of professional conduct in the media and within communication and information-related professions of all kinds.

32. Furthermore, research should be undertaken as far as possible in ways that respect the need in different contexts for *Prevention, Provision and Participation – 3Ps*, in order to ensure that knowledge societies do not infringe upon people's human rights. Research should be directed in some cases at prevention entailing measures to alleviate harm; in other instances it should be concerned with provision and involve addressing deficits; and in all cases it should encourage participation and bottom up approaches.

33. Research is needed that develops theoretical and methodological approaches that focus on communication as a dynamic process involving power relationships and differences with respect to whether specific features of knowledge societies are empowering of individuals in terms of their well-being. Research should be transnational in its outlook and focused on revealing dynamics that give rise to perpetuation of power differentials. These may be related to access to communication and information, inequality with respect to literacies and uneven capabilities for information and communication management.

34. The research framework must encourage a rethinking of development, politics and democracy alongside considerations of cultural diversity. It also must avoid dichotomies such as old and new media, the public versus the private sector, and information 'haves' and 'have nots'. Instead, research must be conducted in a transversal way that contributes to integrated perspectives and understands contemporary problems in multiple ways.

35. It is important to compare the results of research undertaken from mainstream perspectives with that undertaken within the alternative framework discussed here. The former often focuses on the impact of the production or consumption of information or media without giving sufficient attention to sustainable development issues or the goals set out in the MDGs. The alternative research framework outlined here puts the emphasis on the well-being of social groups, for example, with respect to health, education and literacies, and human rights. This alternative research framework also places a strong emphasis on the ethical and moral considerations raised by developments in knowledge societies.

36. For many students and researchers today, the academic reference points often remain those drawn from the United States or other Western countries. Many of those in the scholarly community who focus on the issues of concern here remain

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[14] This includes, but extends beyond, journalism education.

unaware of alternative research frameworks and the literature that is already available.[15]   A very high priority should be given, not only to developing alternative frameworks, but also to widely disseminating this research agenda.

37. The relationship between the media, cultural diversity and issues such as national sovereignty and independence, ownership and control, personal identity and community participation is essential to understand in a wide variety of contexts, especially given the ongoing tensions between the media's participation in an the global economy, as a means of indigenous expression and as a key contributor to sustainable development and peaceful human relations.[16]   The overarching issues of cultural diversity are linked closely to those of governance and to the emergence of the media info-structure and education.
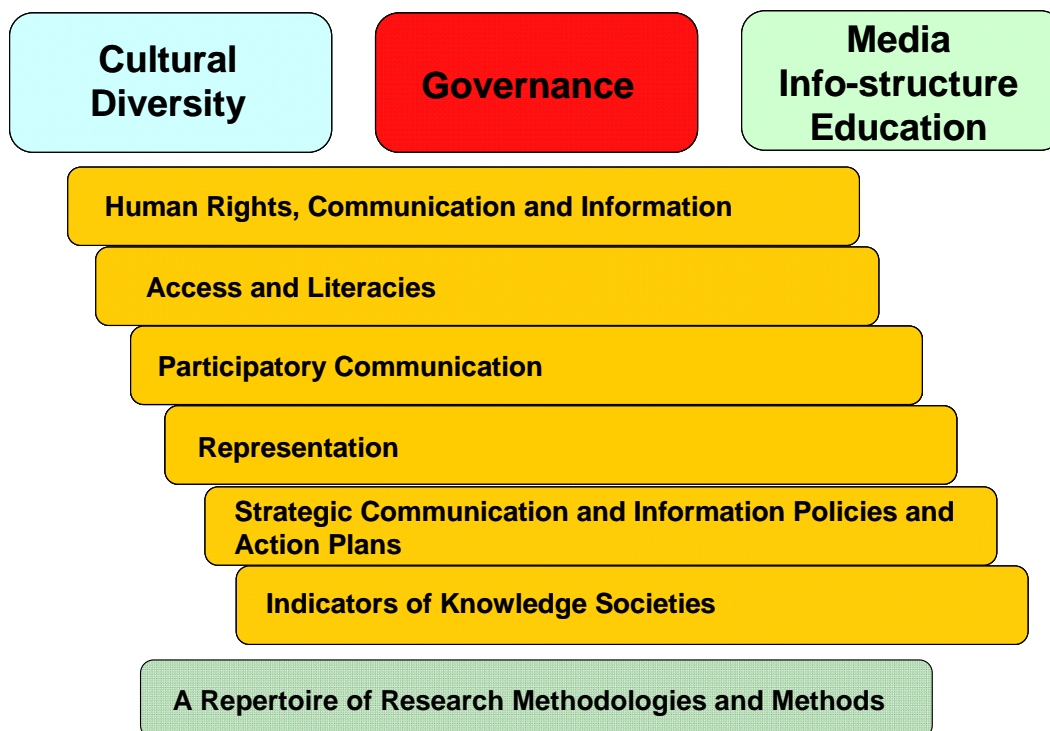
38. The emergence of new international actors (IGOs, NGOs and dynamic partnerships, coalitions and alliances mobilized both online and offline) is giving rise to new perspectives on the conduct of foreign policy focused on the control of access and the production of cultural industries as well as on the way various publics are implicated (national, subnational, transnational, indigenous, and diasporic). Emerging modes of governance have a bearing on media and have implications for international integration for global governance in the audiovisual and related media and communication sectors. These developments, in turn, influence the dynamics of resistance and alternatives that are being offered by open models, such as the creative commons, open source software, and public service requirements for online spaces.

39. The research domains outlined in the next section (see Figure 1) were considered by workshop participants to be important focal points for theoretical and empirical work in the coming years. These are not prioritised as the requirements for work in each area will differ depending on the specific context in which research is conducted.

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[15] There are of course alternative research agenda being developed with the US, for example, see McChesney, R. W. (2007) *Communication Revolution: Critical Junctions and the Future of Media*, New York: The New Press.
[16] See UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted by the 31st session of the General Conference of UNESCO, Paris, 2 November 2001.

Figure 1: Research Framework
Rethinking sustainable development in the context of knowledge societies

Cultural Diversity	Governance	Media Info-structure Education

Human Rights, Communication and Information

Access and Literacies

Participatory Communication

Representation

Strategic Communication and Information Policies and Action Plans

Indicators of Knowledge Societies

A Repertoire of Research Methodologies and Methods

3. Research Domains

3.1 Human Rights, Communication and Information

40. Given the research framework's emphasis on human well-being and the implications for the role of communication and information including the media, greater emphasis needs to be given to examining how, and to what extent, information and communication-related rights are being respected in today's knowledge societies.[17] The adoption of the United Nations Charter in 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN UDHR) in 1948 obliged all States to establish, protect and enforce human rights at the global, regional, national and local levels. In particular, Article 19 of the UDHR declares that:

> "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and opinion; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

41. There is debate about whether there is a need for formal establishment of a 'right to communicate' and a range of views was reflected in the workshop discussion. It is clear, however, that there is a strong relationship between recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all people and their right or entitlement to participate in communication and information environments. This relationship was

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[17] See also Vega Montiel, A. (2007) 'A Preliminary Reading of the Background Document: Human Rights, the Fundamental Framework', note prepared for the UNESCO Brainstorming Meeting, 11 December.

acknowledged in the Millennium Declaration, 18 September 2000, which under "V. Human rights, democracy and good governance" resolves "to ensure the freedom of the media to perform their essential role and the right of the public to have access to information". Key research questions in this domain are:

- What are the legal conditions for free speech and a free press in emerging and other democracies and how can these be sustained?

- What are the legal and other conditions enabling or constraining access to communication and information environments by social groups (in addition to journalists)?

- What are the relationships between the property rights of commercial media owners, the rights of journalists and editors to freedom of expression, and the public's rights of access?

- What special enabling environments make the media business of today differ from other businesses, giving rise to a case for preserving spaces (whether through access to content or infrastructure resources such as radio spectrum, and, openness) for democratic communication?

- What are the trends with respect to the elimination of content that stereotypes representations of individuals and groups for reasons of gender, ethnicity, age, nationality, education or economic level?

- What is the contribution of media in the promotion of human rights, in terms of representation and influence on social knowledge?

- In what sense do media influence the human rights of women with respect to Access to media (as owners, producers and professionals); representation, and participation in making decisions processes?

- How are communication and information rights understood from different standpoints in different countries and regions?

- What is distinctive about the legislative and institutional frameworks that are being established?

42. Comparative research is needed if we are to gain insight into how differences with respect to both the creation and enforcement of legal and institutional frameworks in these areas, in turn, have implications for people's well-being. There is a need for new instruments for an assessment of the conditions for free speech. UNESCO is involved in defining indicators for media development but those concerned with legal and institutional developments are highly dependent on the subjective impressions of media actors who are requested to provide data. Efforts are needed to develop more objective measures and assessments.

43. There is also a need for a critical review and synthesis of research on communication and information (including media) ethics and morality as well as cultural diversity.[18] Particularly urgent questions are:

- Is there is a need for a minimum/universal ethical standard applicable to practitioners?

- How does information and communication (including media) production influence moral conduct and our understanding of others?

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[18] See Diedong, A. (2007) 'Ethical Dimensions of the Information Society', report prepared for UNESCO and the IAMCR 50th Anniversary Conference, July, Paris, forthcoming as online publication in 2008.

- How is cultural diversity affected by the introduction of new media and what are the repercussions, politically, legally, economically and socially?

- What are the implications of new trends in transnational governance for cultural diversity?

- What are the implications of cultural diversity policies on national sovereignty and independence, ownership and control, personal identity and community participation?

- Are new forms of indigenous expression emerging via the social networks are there new forms of cultural erosion and exclusion and what are the challenges for multiculturalism and for intercultural conflicts?

3.2 Access and Literacies

44. In line with an emphasis on well-being, research on issues of access needs to be combined with research on capacity building with respect to the literacies required for functioning in knowledge societies. It was observed that there is a 'double gap', i.e. there are issues of the accessibility and affordability of media – and communication and information environments of all kinds. There are also issues of access to relevant content, not only by elites, but by all people.

45. Research needs to be focussed on capacity building for the production of content and specifically on who is consuming different kinds of content (including community radio, newspapers and new digital media).

46. Research in this area needs to move beyond simplistic and dualistic thinking. Investigations of the 'digital divide' and counts of whether individuals have access to specific information and communication technologies are not helpful unless they are coupled with new insights into the dynamics of specific informational and communicative contexts.

47. Access needs to be rethought in terms of a wide range of communication and information capabilities or literacies. As Carlsson argues:

> "Media and information literacy is needed for all citizens, but is of decisive importance to the younger generation - in both their role as citizens and their participation in society, and their learning, cultural expression and personal fulfilment. A fundamental element of efforts to realize a media and information literate society is media education".[19]

48. Literacies need to be investigated with respect to different social groups and their specific needs taking age, gender, class, ethnicity, disabilities, and minorities into account. Access questions need to be extended to include literacies related, for example, to education, political participation, entrepreneurship, and the management of new kinds of networks of partnerships. Media education together with 'info-competencies' need to be developed to foster improved comprehension, critical thinking, creativity and cross-cultural awareness.

49. Particular attention should be given to differences in access and literacy levels among groups such as migrant labourers and the conditions that prevail for urban as compared to rural workers. In all cases, the focus should be on indigenous media and communication and information environments, and on the potentials of new social networks for knowledge societies.

50. Research should focus on questions such as the following:

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[19] See Carlsson, U. (2007) 'Some Reflections on the Background Document', note prepared for the UNESCO Brainstorming Meeting, 20-21 December.

- What is the relevance of content available to different social groups?

- How are various types of information and communication systems related to fostering and maintaining relationships within and between different communities (i.e. not simply issues of connection, but connectedness).

- How do various ownership configurations influence access to information and communication products and services and, with respect to content, what are the implications of ownership for diversity, quality, and unconditional access?

- How do various social groups use information and media content (understanding, appropriation, meaning formation)?

- What is the relationship between public goods and market based models in terms of widespread access to an information commons and what policy measures are needed to preserve a sustainable information commons?

51. Communication and information literacies encompass 'media literacy'. Research is needed to understand how people can become critical media users, to develop effective ways of building teacher capabilities, and to examine what levels of literacies are present in different regions and countries. It is also important to understand who the producers of new forms of user generated content are and what levels of literacy they are able to achieve. This implies that we should investigate:

- What competences, skills, attitudes and values are necessary for developing a core curriculum in media education and what means are available to develop these?

- What media literacy strategies are available for multi-stakeholders in the context of web 2.0?

- How can media literacy be a tool for empowerment and fostering trust with the help of all stakeholders?

- What are the advantages or drawbacks of relating media education to issues of human rights and what are the relations between media and education as a means for inclusion, intercultural dialogue and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts?

- Is it possible to map the professions at the interface between users and content (such as ombudsmen, webmasters, list moderators, computer tutors, and train them for literacies required to promote sustainable development?

- How effective are the strategies to identify and overcome the risk of a generational divide, especially in relation to the digital switchover which ultimately will have worldwide implications?[20]

A major field of research in this area concerns the potential of sharable or Open Educational Resources (OER).[21] The further development of such resources involves

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[20] See, French National Commission of UNESCO and UNESCO (2007) *Media Education Advances, Obstacles, and New Trends Since Grünwald: Towards a Scale Change?,* Proceedings, Synthesis and Recommendations, International meeting 21-22 June, Paris (in French and in English), published on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the UNESCO Grünwald Declaration, paving the way for media education at the international level.

[21] Open educational resources (OER) is a term first adopted by UNESCO in 2002 to promote an education commons of learning content, tools and management software for higher education. It has since been taken up by iCommons conferences and those associated with the worldwide movement to make materials and resources openly available through licenses similar to those promoted by the Free/Open Source Software community.

many governance decisions that will have a major impact on the extent to which future communication and information environments are able to foster learning, especially by social groups that are excluded today. Research questions include:

- How effective are OER as compared to other models?

- What patterns are appearing in the worldwide governance of these resources?

- What are the new trends in learning systems and what ownership types are associated with schools, universities, other learning communities?

- What are the implications of new digital platforms for the future of print media and the reading culture? What policies are needed to enhance reading in the multimedia age and what specific capabilities are needed to encourage learning?

52. In addition, work is needed to refine understanding of specific communication and information literacies or capabilities required for participation in knowledge societies.

- What measures would be needed to encourage training for teachers and learners in the required literacies as part of the curriculum at primary and secondary level?

- What are the levels of literacies among user-generated content providers?

3.3 Participatory Communication

53. This domain of research focuses on participatory communication from a variety of perspectives including developments in 'citizen' or 'networked' journalism.[22] From a governance perspective research is needed to understand the sustainability of emerging forms of participation by civil society and the extent to which new communication and information environments can contribute to democratic participation, e.g. social networking using Facebook, MySpace and a host of related Internet sites.

54. This research domain extends to questions about the implications of 'free-to-air' entertainment and 'open/free' information services emerging in parallel with online user-pay commodities and services. Trends in participatory communication are developing alongside trends towards user-pay models organised around profitable business models. The relationships between these models need to be better understood to understand whether transitions between them are working in both directions or whether use-pay models are ascendant over civil society interests in media and communication and information services that are consistent with democratic participation.

55. Changing patterns of media and information production and consumption need to be examined with attention to different social groups, such as young people and marginalised groups. The media play an important role in contexts where there is a need to mediate conflict and research has shown that it is not appropriate to assume that there is an automatic relationship between the presence of a free and

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[22] See Beckett, C. and Mansell, R. (2008 forthcoming) 'Crossing Boundaries: New Media and Networked Journalism', *Communication, Culture & Critique,* Inaugural Issue.

independent media sector and the strengthening of civil society and democracy in fragile states.[23]

56. There are many issues with respect to the way public service broadcasting is managing the shift from the state sector in some countries, including whether parliamentary or government broadcasts are aired, and the implications of changes in public service broadcasting for alternative media outlets. Developments in these areas raise new questions about the trustworthiness of communication and information environments.

57. Research questions include:

- What policy frameworks are consistent with enhancing sustainability? How do these differ in different countries or regions?

- What are the implications of commercialisation and of alternative forms of institutionalisation such as state control and private ownership?

- In different countries and regions, are there indications of new emergent forms of elitism?

- What different forms are emerging? Can these be mapped to indicate features such as the extent of multilingualism, whether these developments are giving voice to those who have been marginalised, and what new forms of professionalism are emerging that constitute ethical conduct?

- What roles are community media (including community radio and multimedia centres) playing in a more complex communication and information environment and what motivates volunteers to participate? Is their role as intermediaries changing in a more complex environment?

58. Research in this area needs to be extended beyond the wealthy Western countries, to investigate how communication and information environments are being mediated by older and newer information and communication technologies, from radio, to multimedia sites and through the growing use of mobile phones. The fundamental questions are:

- Who is being included and excluded from these developments?

- Who participates in content creation and who is able to attract attention?

- What are the implications for the way issues are reported and for the representation of various social groups?

- What differences are there between commercially supported developments and voluntary initiatives? What is the turnover of participants and are new forms of dominance emerging?

- What are the implications of today's knowledge societies for intergenerational communication?

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[23] See James, B. (ed) (2004) *Media Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, UNESCO, and Putzel, J. and van der Zwan, J. (2007) *Why Templates for Media Development do not work in Crisis States: Defining and understanding media development strategies in post-war and crisis states*, LSE Crisis States Research Centre (CSRC), London.

3.4 Representation

59. Knowledge societies are generating increasingly complex structures and systems for organising knowledge of all kinds. These embrace all forms of media and communication and information systems or 'infostructures'. They enable new forms of representation and entail many new conventions, norms and standards. These are present in the mainstream and alternative media and communication systems. They are also embedded within the 'code' or conventions of the way information systems organise and enable access to information.

60. In the light of new developments in communication and information environments, research is needed that focuses on:

- What are the dynamics that lead to new learning systems, and systems of knowledge production and consumption?

- What specific representations generate distrust in traditional systems of understanding and mutual recognition of others and action?

- What are the processes through which authoritative voices are generated and consumed through content representations?

61. These questions need to be addressed in order to understand better how participation and media and information system ownership are related to each other in knowledge societies.

62. Little is known about how new forms of representation of distant others have the potential to give rise to violence, conflict, suffering, and victimisation or about the implications of these representations for public opinion formation and humanitarian action.

63. In addition, the implications of today's mediated environments for the preservation of cultural variety and human values are unclear due to the weak empirical research base in many regions of the world. It is essential to address the underlying theoretical assumptions about the relationships between communication and sustainable development.[24] It is also unclear how these relationships affect those in core and peripheral areas and whether there is adequate encouragement of new forums in which entrepreneurs and other social groups have a voice. Research is needed to understand:

- What is the value of alternative representations and what social dynamics are at work? Do new environments cultivate the exchange of new ideas with new people, i.e. are they consistent with an idea generating culture?

- Do they generate a return on investment that makes them sustainable?

- Do new forms of co-production of content foster greater knowledge sharing within and between social groups, including within families? How do these developments compare with older media such as radio or newspapers.

- Can representations in mainstream and alternative digital platforms contribute to conflict resolution and to the enhancement of tolerance in society?

- What is the impact with respect to representations of violence in the specific case of digital online or console games as well as more broadly with respect to social forms of violence including those relating to gender, age and ethnicity?

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[24] See Agrawal, B. C. (2007) 'Communication and Information: Past Research Achievements and Future Directions', note prepared for the UNESCO Brainstorming Meeting, 11 December.

- In the case of media coverage of violence and conflict, have methods adopted by organisations such as programme tags, and the use of free warning systems been effective in reducing the exposure of young people to violent material?

- What are the implications of new modes of information sharing for intellectual property protection, future educational resources and the prospects for a creative commons?

64. There is a need for empirical evidence on what ethical standards and values are informing cross-cultural reporting and on who is being represented. The education of journalists who work in cross cultural settings remains an important issue.

65. Representation in the digital age also extends to information gathered through a growing array of surveillance techniques and associated databases. These form an increasingly important component of knowledge societies' infostructures. Research is needed on the potential of digital communication and information networks to produce data about all human activity and with respect to all people.

- How can we evaluate the impact of the development of computing and artificial intelligence needed to engage in surveillance?

- What is the potential for the (mis-)use of such data by government institutions or private enterprises?

- What are the dangers or risks to the public interest?

66. A major area for research, given the expansion of communication and information environments, concerns cognition and neuro-science relating to the management of information flows and the way these intersect with representations of information and the implications for memory.

3.5 Strategic Communication and Information Policies and Action Plans

67. The past three decades have seen the publication of many reports outlining recommendations for what have come to be known today as knowledge or societies. In 1980 UNESCO published, *Many Voices, One World*, the report of its International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems also known as the MacBride Report.[25] In the 1990s, and continuing into the present, numerous countries have been encouraged to prepare strategies for reducing inequality in access to information and communication technologies, and more recently, the Internet. This activity has been supported by many governmental and intergovernmental agencies, including UNESCO.

68. The preparation of the WSIS established a new model for the participation of stakeholders in a major United Nations summit and, consequently, in international cooperation. During the years of the Summit process, new practices emerged which, through innovative interaction modes, enabled a wide variety of partners to contribute to the decision making process. The Summit provided a laboratory for new forms of governance and, more generally, for new ways of proceeding in future global negotiations.

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[25] See Mansell, R. and Nordenstreng, K. (2006) 'Great Media and Communication Debates – WSIS and the MacBride Report, *Information Technologies and International Development*, 3(4): 15-36. See also Carlsson, U. (2005) From NWICO to global governance of the information society, in O. Hemer & T. Tufte (eds) *Media and Glocal Change: Rethinking Communication for Development,* (pp. 193-214), Buenos Aires: NORDICOM & CLACSO.

69. In addition to conducting research on the impact and possible benefits of these new forms of governance on UNESCO's actions in the area of communication and information (including in its intergovernmental programmes IPDC and IFAP), there is a need to assess the barriers to progress as well as the signs of positive developments. Special emphasis should be given to analyses of participation, continuity and cooperation between multiple stakeholders including those entering partnerships, and enabling those at the local level to influence developments.

70. UNESCO's constitution Article 2 (a), states that the purpose of the Organization is to:

"Collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image".

71. Important research questions in this area are:

- What has been UNESCO's contribution in the light of this objective?

- What evidence of successful interventions exists, especially with respect to specific social groups and their empowerment?

- What is the relationship between the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and changes in national cultural policies and in the role of the media in the implementation of the Convention?

- How are these new forms of governance influencing the resolution of issues around multilingualism and the internationalisation of Internet domain names, for example?

72. The issue of strategies and plans for the communication and information sector is an enormous area and no attempt is made to capture it fully here. The research community should be encouraged to prepare critical reviews and assessments of progress in this area. These should focus on the extent to which the voices of civil society representatives and other social groups have been incorporated into such strategies and associated action plans.

- What is the history of the period from MacBride to the WSIS in terms of the involvement of agencies including UNESCO?

- What has been the nature of participation and consultation, that is, how are people actually involved?

- How has the development of strategies and action plans influenced policy diagnoses in specific countries?

- What evaluation instruments have been - and are being – used? If they have been built elsewhere, are they appropriate for local contexts?

- What is the future role of transnational institutions of various kinds including intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations?

73. In addition to the need for assessments of whether and how strategies and action plans for the communication and information sector have made a difference, research is needed on specific topics and issue areas relating to contemporary problems and the role of the media (and more generally, science communication). The core research questions in this domain are:

- What are the communication and information-related means of tackling contemporary problems associated with well-being, e.g. with respect, for

example, to HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, health, the environment, climate change and methods of mitigating these problems?

- What are the barriers and opportunities for bottom-up policy formation and implementation? What selective empirical follow-up of the effectiveness of existing strategies can be undertaken?

- In specific problem areas, is there evidence of 'leapfrogging', that is, of the success (or failure) of different kinds of interventions?

74. Workshop participants suggested that a very high priority should be given to the investigation of the role of communication strategies for HIV/AIDS Prevention.[26] There is cross-cultural research on strategies with respect to dealing with epidemics generally but measures to alleviate the constraints (financial) on reporting, specifically in this area, are not well-understood. Communication and human behavioural change at multiple levels continues to need to be studied. The results of work in this area may suggest approaches that could be used in other areas of contemporary problems.

75. There is an ongoing need for critiques of communication instruments proposed so far and for empirical research on what has happened. With respect to HIV/AIDS prevention, there is a need to examine existing frameworks, critique available instruments and develop a matrix for action (tools and framework) – linked to knowledge management.[27]

- What are the underlying assumptions, models and theories can best serve as departure points for strategies in this area?

- What are the measures and basic practices that would lead to empowerment of people in the face of the HIV/AIDS epidemic? How can these measures and practices be sustained?

- Are there signs that HIV/AIDS communication strategies are being linked to nutrition as a frame for effective messages, and not just being treated as advertising messages?

- Are there cross culturally valid strategies for prevention of HIV/AIDS or is each context so specific that it is not possible to replicate strategies?

76. More generally with respect to science communication:

- What are the understandings of management with respect to public service remits and reporting?

- To what extent do financial pressures squeeze out space for informed reporting?

- What is the role of the media in communicating scientific information? To what extent are capacities for science communication prevalent in developing countries and what gaps exist?

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[26] For a discussion of the role of the media in this context, see Bolognesi, N. and Swartz, L. (2007) 'The Media Management of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Window to Developing Communication Strategies for the Epidemic in the Region', report prepared for UNESCO and the IAMCR 50th Anniversary Conference, July, Paris, forthcoming as online publication in 2008.

[27] This work could build for example, on UNAIDS/UNFPA (2001) 'Report of the Planning Meeting on Strategic Options for HIV/AIDS Advocacy in Africa', UNAIDS/UNFPA, which found that 'advocacy for HIV/AIDS in Africa is a multifaceted bundle of specific and coordinated strategic actions' including use of the media.

4. Repertoire of Research Methodologies and Methods

77. Workshop participants acknowledged the need for a flexible and varied repertoire of research methodologies and methods, implemented in the light of varied contexts for research. It was acknowledged that all indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) can be misleading if they are not interpreted in the light of contextual information. Both have a role to play in providing insights or maps of changes in knowledge societies.

78. It is not feasible, in the absence of empirical evidence, for stakeholders to consider the interventions necessary to enhance well-being if they have no information about the nature of communication and information-related inequalities and their expression in different places and at different times. However, many of the global and universal efforts to develop quantitative indicators of knowledge societies are insufficiently fine-grained and are insensitive to differences in knowledge societies.[28]

79. Ethnographic and related methods offer the potential to provide valuable information and insight. Such methods can provide data about the myriad forms of communication and information mediation, community practices, meanings and representations, and perceptions of conflict or mutual understanding. Reflexive methods should be encouraged alongside the development of survey-based methods designed to produce quantitative indicators of knowledge societies.

80. In some cases, cross national (or regional) comparisons may be important, while in others, in-depth study of specific contexts will be more revealing depending on which actors are intended to benefit from the results of research, i.e. local intermediaries, local populations, governments, etc.

5. Indicators of Knowledge Societies

81. Research is needed to map the deficits in qualitative and quantitative indicators relevant to answering the research questions outlined in Section 3.

82. Workshop participants focused on the need for improved indicators in several key areas. In each of these, there is a need to establish criteria for the selection and development of indicators and to validate them.

83. There were differences of opinion about whether inter-country comparison using indicators is helpful. Some took the view that such comparisons contribute to the view that all societies should be progressing towards homogeneous knowledge societies, i.e. meeting similar indicator targets and benchmarks. Others took the view that such indicators provide actors within countries with a basis for choosing priorities for action. The development and publication of indicators was described as a 'minefield', but it was regarded as important for policy building at the national level. The key research question is:

> **How can indicators be developed which are responsive to the 3Cs (Communication, Culture and Context) and the 3Ps (Prevention, Provision and Participation)?**

84. There were differences of opinion about whether the highest priority should be given to developing indicators for transitional societies, taking into account what is

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[28] For a discussion of this issue see, Dunn, H. and Johnson-Brown, S. (2007) 'Information Literacies and Digital Empowerment in the Global South', report prepared for UNESCO and the IAMCR 50th Anniversary Conference, July, Paris, forthcoming as online publication in 2008.

practical to achieve in these societies, or whether all countries should be included. The latter view was held by those who emphasised that wealthy countries are also experiencing transitions with new forms of inclusion and exclusion as a result of power disparities leading to communication and information-related inequalities. Some argued that differences in the perception and reception of indicator data should become the subject of a dialogue between different groups. UNESCO's work in this area is highly respected and the distinctive characteristics of various zones, regions, countries and situations can be taken into account through differences in the ways that indicator data are interpreted and used.

85. It was argued that indicators need to be as people-centred as possible and that a wide range of indicators is essential. The research community can contribute to their critical assessment, especially in areas related to the creative industries and intellectual property, for example. It was emphasised that work in this area needs to consider the anticipated end use of any indicators, i.e. who are the intended recipients of the information? There was agreement that there is a need to identify gaps in this area and that UNESCO plays an important role in initiating debate about what may be lacking in particular societies. UNESCO also is aware of the limitations of data collection exercises of this kind:

> 'At a minimum, there is the need for thorough analyses and interpretation of the indicators (and the raw data on which they are based), grounded not just in the technical aspects but also with an in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and the country context'. (UNESCO 2003, p. 46-7).

86. UNESCO's Media Development Indicators are being developed across a range of areas including: systems of regulation and control; plurality and transparency of ownership; media as a platform for democratic discourse; professional capacity building and supporting institutions; and infrastructural capacity.[29] The UNESCO Institute for Statistics is responsible for developing indicators for measuring and monitoring information and knowledge societies.[30] At present it is not envisaged that data will be collected on rights or legal frameworks *per se.*

87. More emphasis could be given to issues of the quality and diversity of media provision, to the emergence of online communities (social networks), and the importance of language groups. This could be achieved by refining indicators designed to reflect the representation of different communities and cultures and by giving more attention to age groups (including young people and the elderly) and gender.

88. It is also essential that the research community give attention to future developments based on its analysis of present conditions. In this area there are many areas that need to be addressed, including the growing concern about ecological/environmental issues.[31] The implications of the media for tackling problems of climate change and of the spread of new networks are important for understanding the impact on transportation, use of paper, and energy saving. How do the ecology of nature, mind, and media intersect? What is the potential for new social networks and future developments in Web 3.0 for addressing these issues, through awareness raising and standard setting? New indicators will be needed in the near future to address these issues.

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[29] See UNESCO (2007) 'Media Development Indicators: Outcomes and key indicators', draft for discussion prepared by Mr. Andrew Puddephatt in consultation with the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO.

[30] See for example UNESCO (2003) 'Measuring and Monitoring the Information and Knowledge Societies: A Statistical Challenge', UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Montreal.

89. The research community can contribute by developing indicators for national and cross-country comparison and offering critical assessments of how indicators might be interpreted and received.[32] Key areas for future indicator development are:

- Indicators aimed at providing a standard mapping of legal and institutional frameworks for a free and independent media, particularly, aimed at revealing developments in transitional societies. This could extend to include, for example, preparations for a digital switchover in broadcasting and implications for media concentration as well as indicators on ownership transparency after privatization.

- Self-regulation and standard setting in journalism ethics (trust issues).

- How information and communication technologies and content are actually used and their relationship to sustainable development goals.

Research to verify existing information and communication sector indicators in different selected places based upon clusters of countries could be undertaken.

6. Conclusion: Mobilizing the research community

90. UNESCO is able to play a catalytic role in mobilising efforts to further develop and implement this research framework. Although the Communication and Information Sector has limited resources, it can have a multiplier effect by using its convening power in collaboration with academic communities such as those represented by IAMCR. The research framework set out here is centrally concerned with transnational approaches to social change and transformation leading to human well-being in knowledge societies.

91. The framework is holistic in the sense of inclusivity without privileging specific social science disciplines or methodologies. It is designed to be flexibly applied at the micro and macro levels of analysis and to encourage both context specific and comparative research. The goal is to promote research that understands knowledge societies as distinct, but also systemically interrelated. The aim is to support what some refer to as the 'de-Westernisation' of research in this field. This implies that research must be sensitive to cross-cultural differences and cross-disciplinary. It also implies that theoretical and methodological pluralism must be deliberately cultivated.

92. Research must evidence a strong commitment to critical assessment of mainstream standpoints that reflect only particularly or partially the conditions and potentials for achieving well-being in knowledge societies.

93. There is a very substantial need for researchers to provide syntheses of already existing research (published in the form of short pamphlets and reports) which has been conducted from alternative and critical perspectives. This is especially important as research in this field becomes evermore specialised, meaning that it is increasingly difficult to follow the main trends without a systemic analysis of research outputs. This suggests the growing need for collaboration and comparative studies and efforts to answer questions such as the following:

> "What means do we have to obtain an overall result that is relevant to our needs, in view of all the differences that nonetheless characterize the global system? How do we move towards an innovative and international agenda for

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[32] An initiative to redress the imbalance in coverage of statistics on ICT Access and Usage in Africa is discussed by Gillwald, A. and Stork, C. (2007) 'Towards an African ICT E-Index: Towards Evidence Based ICT Policy in Africa', an initiative covering 17 countries, http://lirne.net/test/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/gillwald-and-stork-2007-b.pdf

these issues, one that cuts across ethnic, cultural, religious and political boundaries and, at the same time, can enhance the quality and value of media and communication research in different parts of the world?"[33]

94. The results of research conducted from these perspectives often yields counterintuitive results. New empirically-grounded insights can influence policy decisions and actions. As one participant put it, the media explosion may actually enhance the position of the 'media rich' and create greater potential for exclusion. If this is so, empirical research is needed to confirm it and to provide a basis for decision makers to act to reduce inequality

95. IAMCR members can contribute to this research agenda in many other ways that are likely to support UNESCO's strategy. For example,

- Empirically-grounded biannual reports could be prepared indicating which voices in selected contexts are being represented or misrepresented.

- In specific issue areas, tool kits could be prepared indicating what has been done in the communication and information domains, what training materials are available, and what legal and other governance challenges have been confronted and overcome.

- Communication strategies that have been developed for addressing contemporary problems (such as HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, health, environment, etc) could be assessed and critiqued with empirical follow-up and evaluations of their effectiveness.

- Indicators could be validated and assessed for their utility in different contexts.

- Comparative studies of clusters of countries could be undertaken on a rolling basis.

96. These ambitions could be realised using UNESCO resources as seed funds but also drawing on other organisations including ORBICOM, the UNESCO network of university Chairs, IAMCR's network of academics and its relations with other professional organisations in the field. IAMCR can play an important role as a facilitator, together with other research groupings and associations, to inform deliberations within a wide range of multi-stakeholder partnerships, especially those which aim to contribute new insights from an independent perspective.

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[33] Carlsson, U. (2007) 'Some Reflections on the Background Document', note prepared for the UNESCO Brainstorming Meeting, 20-21 December.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2: Research Framework and Domains

Core Research Theme: Rethinking sustainable development in the context of knowledge societies (para 19)

Core Research Questions (para 28)**:**

What new concepts are required to acknowledge difference and the distinctiveness of today's knowledge societies with respect to issues of: a) governance, b) cultural diversity and c) media/infostructure education?

What evidence is there of effective learning in each of these areas on the part of different stakeholders?

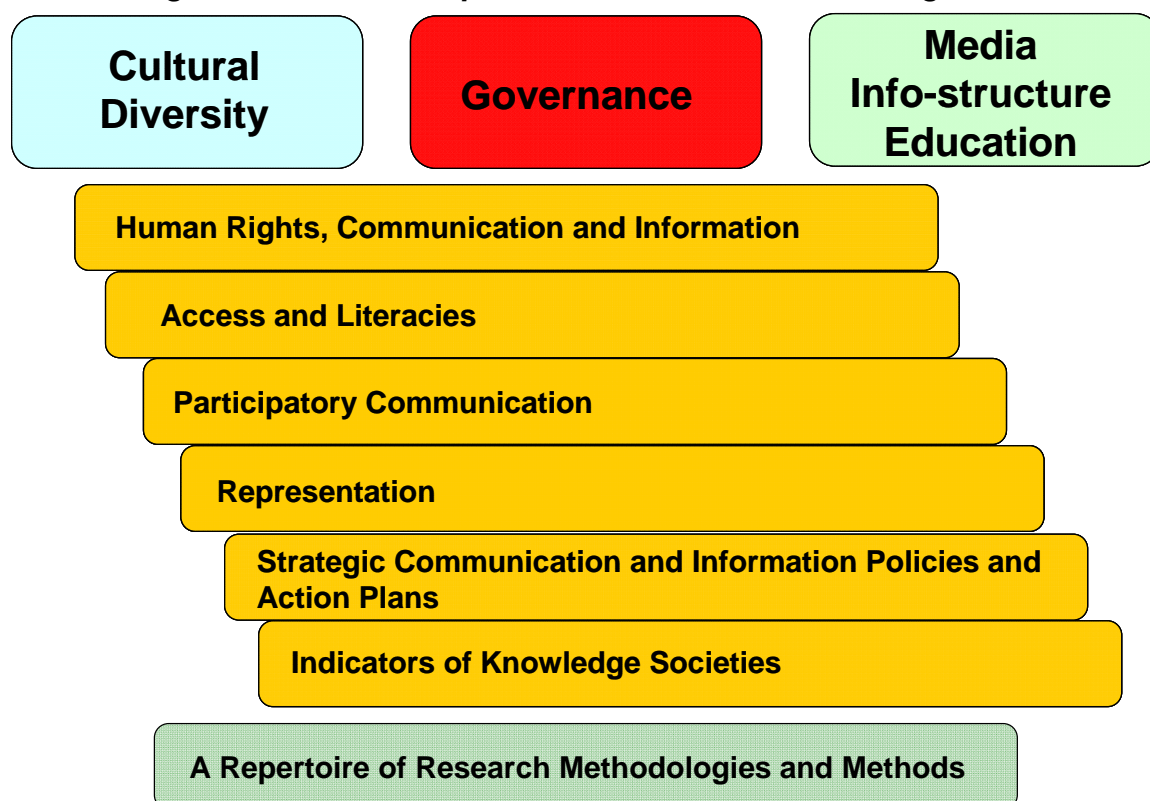Research undertaken within this research framework should give special attention to:

Communication, Culture and Context – 3Cs (para 30)

and

Prevention, Provision and Participation – 3Ps (para 32)

Research Framework
Rethinking sustainable development in the context of knowledge societies

Cultural Diversity	Governance	Media Info-structure Education

Human Rights, Communication and Information

Access and Literacies

Participatory Communication

Representation

Strategic Communication and Information Policies and Action Plans

Indicators of Knowledge Societies

A Repertoire of Research Methodologies and Methods

Core Research Domains (Section 3)

<u>Human Rights, Communication and Information</u> (Section 3.1)

- What are the legal conditions for free speech and a free press in emerging and other democracies and how can these conditions be sustained?

- What are the legal and other conditions enabling or constraining access to communication and information environments by social groups (in addition to journalists)?

- What are the relationships between the property rights of commercial media owners, the rights of journalists and editors to freedom of expression, and the public's rights of access?

- What special enabling environments make the media business of today differ from other businesses, giving rise to a case for preserving spaces (whether through access to content or infrastructure resources such as radio spectrum, and, openness) for democratic communication?

- What are the trends with respect to the elimination of content that stereotypes representations of individuals and groups for reasons of gender, ethnicity, age, nationality, education or economic level?

- What is the contribution of media in the promotion of human rights, in terms of representation and influence on social knowledge?

- In what sense do media influence the human rights of women with respect to Access to media (as owners, producers and professionals); representation, and participation in making decisions processes?

- How are communication and information rights understood from different standpoints in different countries and regions?

- What is distinctive about the legislative and institutional frameworks that are being established?

Comparative research and new instruments for assessing the conditions for free speech.

Critical reviews and synthesis of research on communication and information (including media) ethics and morality.

- Is there is a need for a minimum/universal ethical standard applicable to practitioners?

- How does information and communication (including media) production influence moral conduct and our understanding of others?

- How is cultural diversity affected by the introduction of new media and what are the repercussions, politically, legally, economically and socially?

- What are the implications of new trends in transnational governance for cultural diversity?

- What are the implications of cultural diversity policies on national sovereignty and independence, ownership and control, personal identity and community participation?

- Are new forms of indigenous expression emerging via the social networks are there new forms of cultural erosion and exclusion and what are the challenges for multiculturalism and for intercultural conflicts?

Access and Literacies (Section 3.2)

- What is the relevance of content available to different social groups?

- How are various types of information and communication systems related to fostering and maintaining relationships within and between different communities (i.e. not simply issues of connection, but connectedness).

- How do various ownership configurations influence access to information and communication products and services and, with respect to content, what are the implications of ownership for diversity, quality, and unconditional access?

- How do various social groups use information and media content (understanding, appropriation, meaning formation)?

- What is needed to foster media and information literacy of all citizens, and especially for the younger generation?

- What is the relationship between public goods and market based models in terms of widespread access to an information commons and what policy measures are needed to preserve a sustainable information commons?

Strategies for Media Education

- Which competences, skills, attitudes and values are necessary for developing a core curriculum in media education and what means are available to develop these?

- What media literacy strategies are available for multi-stakeholders in the context of web 2.0?

- How can media literacy be a tool for empowerment and fostering trust with the help of all stakeholders?

- What are the advantages or drawbacks of relating media education to issues of human rights and what are the relations between media and education as a means for inclusion, intercultural dialogue and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts?

- Is it possible to map the professions at the interface between users and content (such as ombudsmen, webmasters, list moderators, computer tutors, and train them for literacies required to promote sustainable development?

- How effective are the strategies to identify and overcome the risk of a generational divide, especially in relation to the digital switchover which ultimately will have worldwide implications?[34]

Potential of sharable or Open Educational Resources (OER):

- How effective are OER as compared to other models?

- What patterns are appearing in the worldwide governance of these resources?

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[34] See, French National Commission of UNESCO and UNESCO (2007) *Media Education Advances, Obstacles, and New Trends Since Grünwald: Towards a Scale Change?,* Proceedings, Synthesis and Recommendations, International meeting 21-22 June, Paris (in French and in English), published on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the UNESCO Grünwald Declaration, paving the way for media education at the international level.

- What are the new trends in learning systems and what ownership types are associated with schools, universities, other learning communities?

- What are the implications of new digital platforms for the future of print media and the reading cultural? What policies are needed to enhance reading in the multimedia age and what specific capabilities are needed to encourage learning?

Specific communication and information literacies:

- What measures would be needed to encourage training for teachers and learners in the required literacies as part of the curriculum at primary and secondary level?

- What are the levels of literacies among user-generated content providers?

Participatory Communication (Section 3.3)

- What policy frameworks are consistent with enhancing sustainability? How do these differ in different countries or regions?

- What are the implications of commercialisation and of alternative forms of institutionalisation such as state control and private ownership?

- In different countries and regions, are there indications of new emergent forms of elitism?

- What different forms are emerging? Can these be mapped to indicate features such as the extent of multilingualism, whether these developments are giving voice to those who have been marginalised, and what new forms of professionalism are emerging that constitute ethical conduct?

- What roles are community media (including community radio and multimedia centres) playing in a more complex communication and information environment and what motivates volunteers to participate? Is their role as intermediaries changing in a more complex environment?

Mediation by older and newer information and communication technologies:

- Who is being included and excluded from these developments?

- Who participates in content creation and who is able to attract attention?

- What are the implications for the way issues are reported and for the representation of various social groups?

- What differences are there between commercially supported developments and voluntary initiatives? What is the turnover of participants and are new forms of dominance emerging?

- What are the implications of today's knowledge societies for intergenerational communication?

Representation (Section 3.4)

- What are the dynamics that lead to new learning systems, and systems of knowledge production and consumption?

- What specific representations generate distrust in traditional systems of understanding and mutual recognition of others and action?

- What are the processes through which authoritative voices are generated and consumed through content representations?

Representation of distant others:

- What is the value of alternative representations and what social dynamics are at work? Do new environments cultivate the exchange of new ideas with new people, i.e. are they consistent with an idea generating culture?

- Do they generate a return on investment that makes them sustainable?

- Do new forms of co-production of content foster greater knowledge sharing within and between social groups, including within families? How do these developments compare with older media such as radio or newspapers.

- Can representations in mainstream and alternative digital platforms contribute to conflict resolution and to the enhancement of tolerance in society?

- What is the impact with respect to representations of violence in the specific case of digital online or console games as well as more broadly with respect to social forms of violence including those relating to gender, age and ethnicity?

- In the case of media coverage of violence and conflict, have methods adopted by organisations such as programme tags, and the use of free warning systems been effective in reducing the exposure of young people to violent material?

- What are the implications of new modes of information sharing for intellectual property protection, future educational resources and the prospects for a creative commons?

Representation in knowledge info-structures:

- How can we evaluate the impact of the development of computing and artificial intelligence needed to engage in surveillance?

- What is the potential for the (mis-)use of such data by government institutions or private enterprises?

- What are the dangers or risks to the public interest?

Strategic Communication and Information Policies & Action Plans (Section 3.5)

- What has been UNESCO's contribution in the light of this objective?

- What evidence of successful interventions exists, especially with respect to specific social groups and their empowerment??

- What is the relationship between the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and changes in national cultural policies and in the role of the media in the implementation of the Convention?

- How are these new forms of governance influencing the resolution of issues around multilingualism and the internationalisation of Internet domain names, for example?

Critical reviews and assessments of progress:

- What is the history of the period from MacBride to the WSIS in terms of the involvement of agencies including UNESCO?

- What has been the nature of participation and consultation, that is, how are people actually involved?

- How has the development of strategies and action plans influenced policy diagnoses in specific countries?

- What evaluation instruments have been - and are being – used? If they have been built elsewhere, are they appropriate for local contexts?

- What is the future role of transnational institutions of various kinds including intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations?

Strategies and action plans – Do they make a difference?

- What are the communication and information-related means of tackling contemporary problems associated with well-being, e.g. with respect, for example, to HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, health, the environment, climate change and methods of mitigating these problems?

- What are the barriers and opportunities for bottom-up policy formation and implementation? What selective empirical follow-up of the effectiveness of existing strategies can be undertaken?

- In specific problem areas, is there evidence of 'leapfrogging', that is, of the success (or failure) of different kinds of interventions?

Communication strategies for HIV/AIDS Prevention:

- What are the underlying assumptions, models and theories can best serve as departure points for strategies in this area?

- What are the measures and basic practices that would lead to empowerment of people in the face of the HIV/AIDS epidemic? How can these measures and practices be sustained?

- Are there signs that HIV/AIDS communication strategies are being linked to nutrition as a frame for effective messages, and not just being treated as advertising messages?

- Are there cross culturally valid strategies for prevention of HIV/AIDS or is each context so specific that it is not possible to replicate strategies?

Science communication:

- What are the understandings of management with respect to public service remits and reporting?

- To what extent do financial pressures squeeze out space for informed reporting?

- What is the role of the media in communicating scientific information? To what extent are capacities for science communication prevalent in developing countries and what gaps exist?

A Repertoire of Research Methodologies and Methods (Section 4)

- Flexible and varied repertoire of research methodologies and methods.

- Global and universal efforts to develop quantitative indicators are insufficiently fine-grained.

- Ethnographic and related methods offer much potential.

- Both cross-national (or regional) comparisons and studies of specific contexts should be supported.

Indicators of Knowledge Societies (Section 5)

Map deficits in qualitative and quantitative indicators and ensure that the research community is more fully aware of the efforts that are underway to avoid replicating existing work.

- How can indicators be developed which are responsive to the 3Cs (Communication, Culture and Context) and the 3Ps (Prevention, Provision and Participation)?

Develop indicators for national and cross-country comparison and critical assessments of indicators.

Key areas for future indicator development:

- Indicators aimed at providing a standard mapping of legal and institutional frameworks for a free and independent media, particularly, aimed at revealing developments in transitional societies. This could extend to include, for example, preparations for a digital switchover in broadcasting and implications for media concentration as well as indicators on ownership transparency after privatization.

- Self-regulation and standard setting in journalism ethics (trust issues).

- How information and communication technologies and content are actually used and their relationship to sustainable development goals.

Research to verify existing information and communication sector indicators in different selected places based upon clusters of countries could be undertaken.

Action (Section 6)

- Provide syntheses of already existing research (published in the form of short pamphlets and reports).

- Empirically-grounded biannual reports could be prepared indicating which voices in selected contexts are being represented or misrepresented.

- In specific issue areas, tool kits could be prepared indicating what has been done in the communication and information domains, what training materials are available, and what legal and other governance challenges have been confronted and overcome.

- Communication strategies that have been developed for addressing contemporary problems (such as HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, health, environment, etc) could be assessed and critiqued with empirical follow-up and evaluations of their effectiveness.

- Indicators validated and assessed for their utility in different contexts.

- Comparative studies of clusters of countries could be undertaken on a rolling basis.

- IAMCR can play an important role as a facilitator, together with other research groupings and associations.