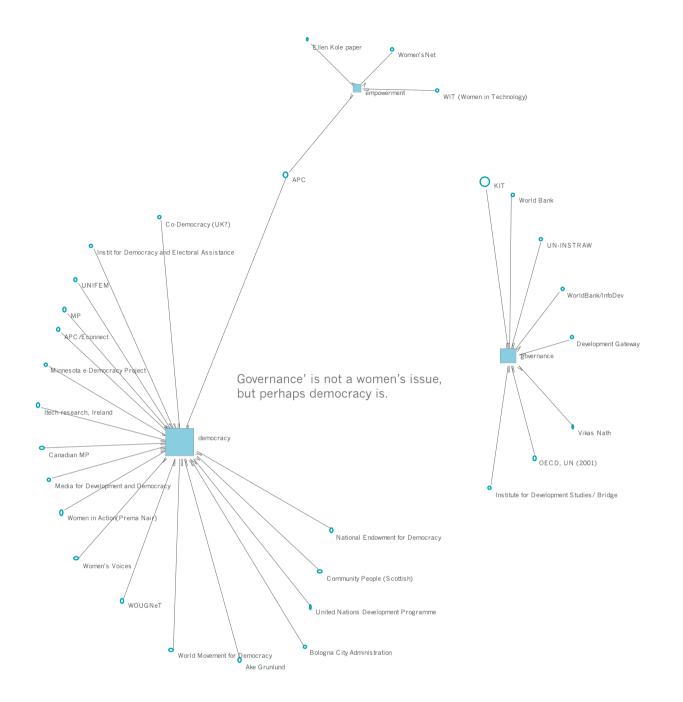
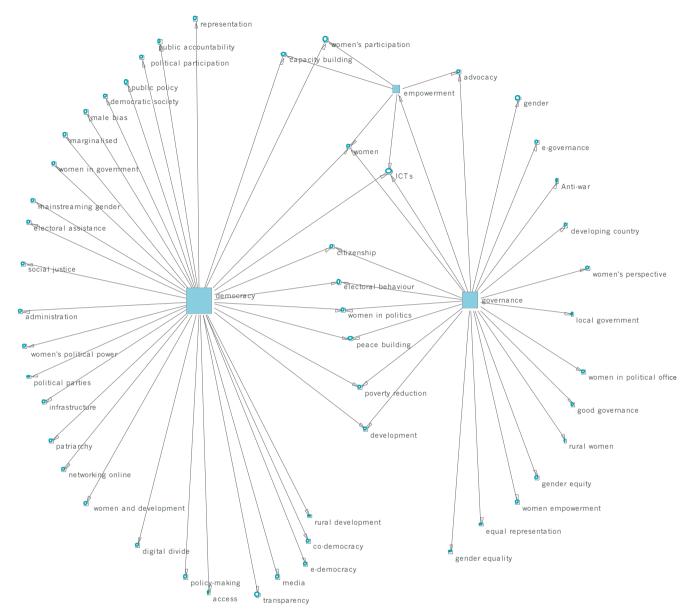


Is e-governance a women's issue?





Where should the 'e' be inserted, if at all? It should be inserted into the vocabulary of democracy and ICTs, as opposed to governance and ICTs.

Introduction

One of us works for a women's organisation called Women's Net, and she is considering to organise a workshop on women and e-governance. As we are not very familiar with this issue-space, and also, as we wonder whether the teaming up of women and governance is really helpful in the light of the objectives of women's organisations, we ask: is egovernance a women's issue, and should it be one?

Actor-Issue Map: governance is not a women's issue

Querying Google for the terms women, ICT and governance, our suspicions are affirmed: governance only appears on the sites of international governing bodies. The term seems to have little to no life beyond the confines of these upper echelons. Virtually no women's organisations are attached to

with democracy AND empowerment, on the other hand, women's organisations do show up on our

Issue-Map: Governance is not a women's issue, but could democracy be?

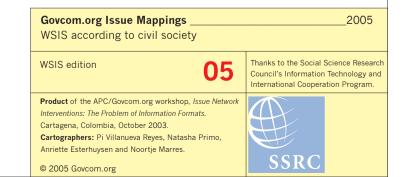
If women's organisations are to become active in this issue area, it seems more appropriate to take up (one of) the other two terms, democracy and empowerment, and attempt to pull the issue-network towards them. But which of the two terms is in this respect more appropriate? One thing to notice is that the term democracy brings along a particularly rich vocabulary, one that is both critical and constructive. (Attached to democracy, we find marginalisation and male bias, but also women in politics and accountability.) The term democracy seems to take into account both the frustrations of women, as well as their this term. Coupling the query terms women AND ICT aspirations. The term empowerment, on the other

hand, emerges here as a relatively poor term -likewise governance, incidentally, which brings along an exclusively positive vocabulary, a feel good melody of "making things better."

Conclusion

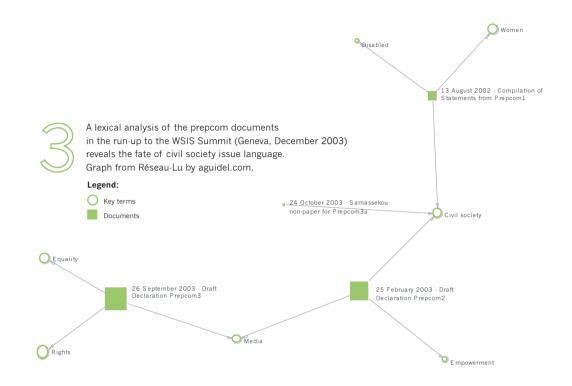
There is at least one catch, as the terms that come with democracy are rather theorical. There is talk of patriarchy here... In this respect, a crucial question is, how can the notion of democracy also begin to cover a feminist practice? One answer is to drag the term advocacy (which is currently linked to empowerment) into the democratic space. Women's Net, which is now attached to empowerment, should not move into the governance issue-space. Governance is not a women's issue. But if Women's Net would decide to move into the world of democracy instead, it would do well to bring along one of its key issues, advocacy. Legend: Key terms Websites

Maps generated from Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com.



Issue couplings for WSIS:

Inserting development, gender and rights into ICT



ICT at WSIS is a hybrid issue?

The book about the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) that the Association of Progressive Communications (APC) recently published, suggests that ICT as an issue is particularly susceptible to "hybridization," that is, couplings with other issues. In the run-up to the World Summit, the articulation of ICT as an object of policy-making (and contestation) is in many cases done by "splicing" ICT with other issues: ICT and development, ICT and privacy, ICT and gender, ICT and security, ICT and human rights, etc.

WSIS according to civil society: A platform for inserting rights and gender into the ICT agenda?

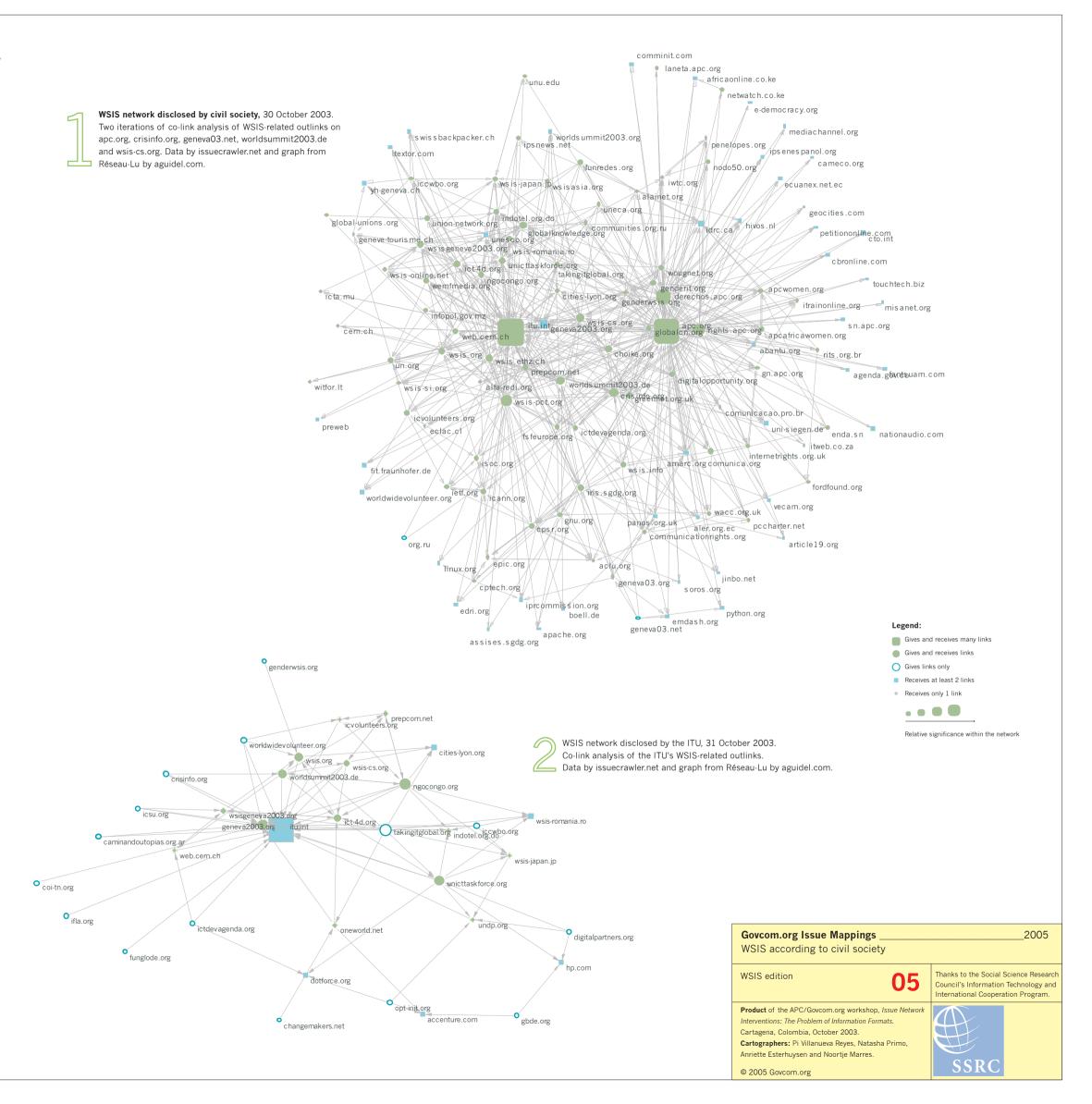
The WSIS network as it is disclosed by civil society organisations does show the prominence of hybrid issues. We find the issues of gender/ICT and rights/ICT at the heart of the network. Single-issue organisations — that is, organisations working primarily on ICT itself — appear more in the margins of the network: icann.org, isoc.org, linux.org, ignu.org.

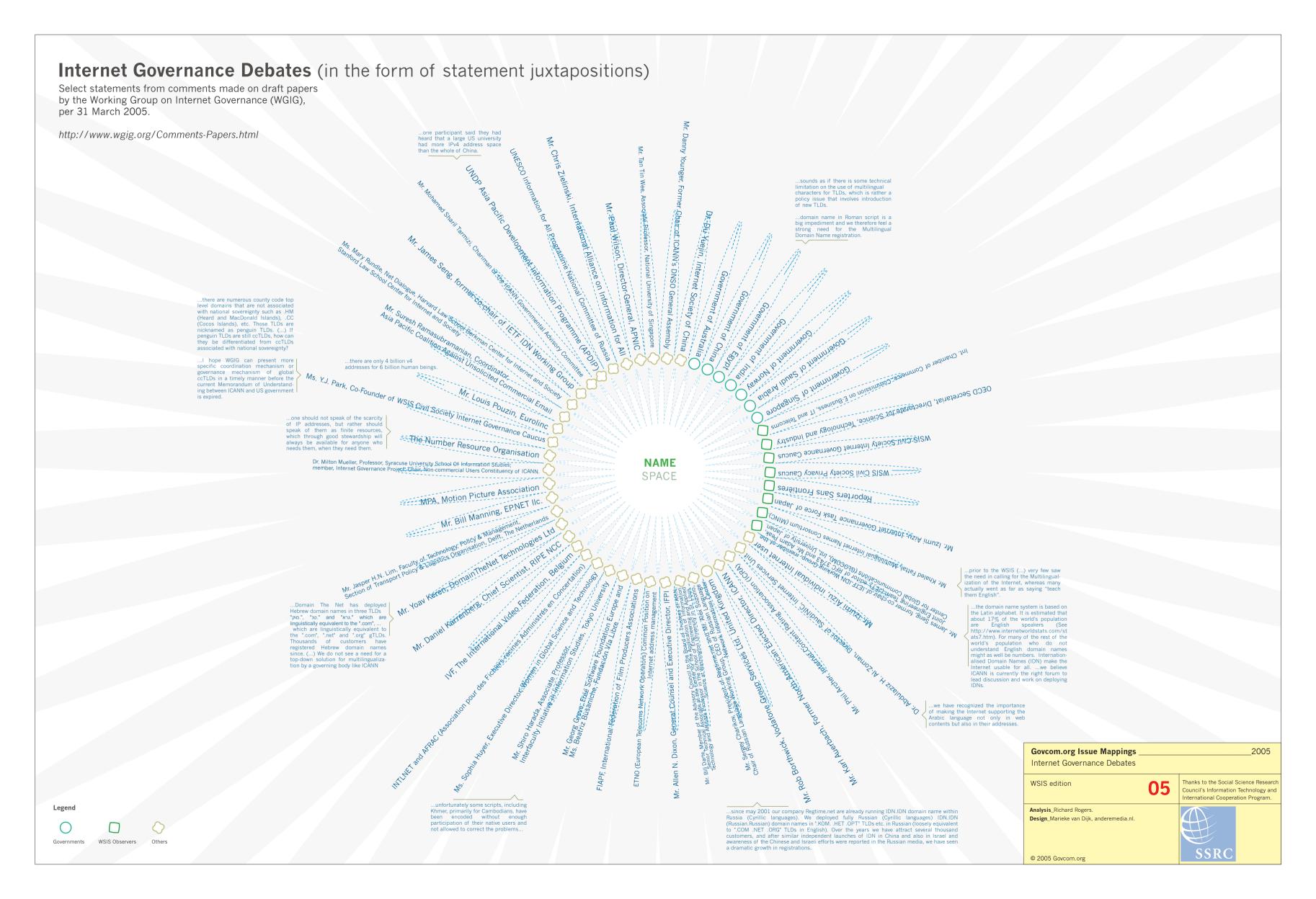
Engendering issue-drift: Civil society attempts to move the agenda from development/ICT to rights and gender?

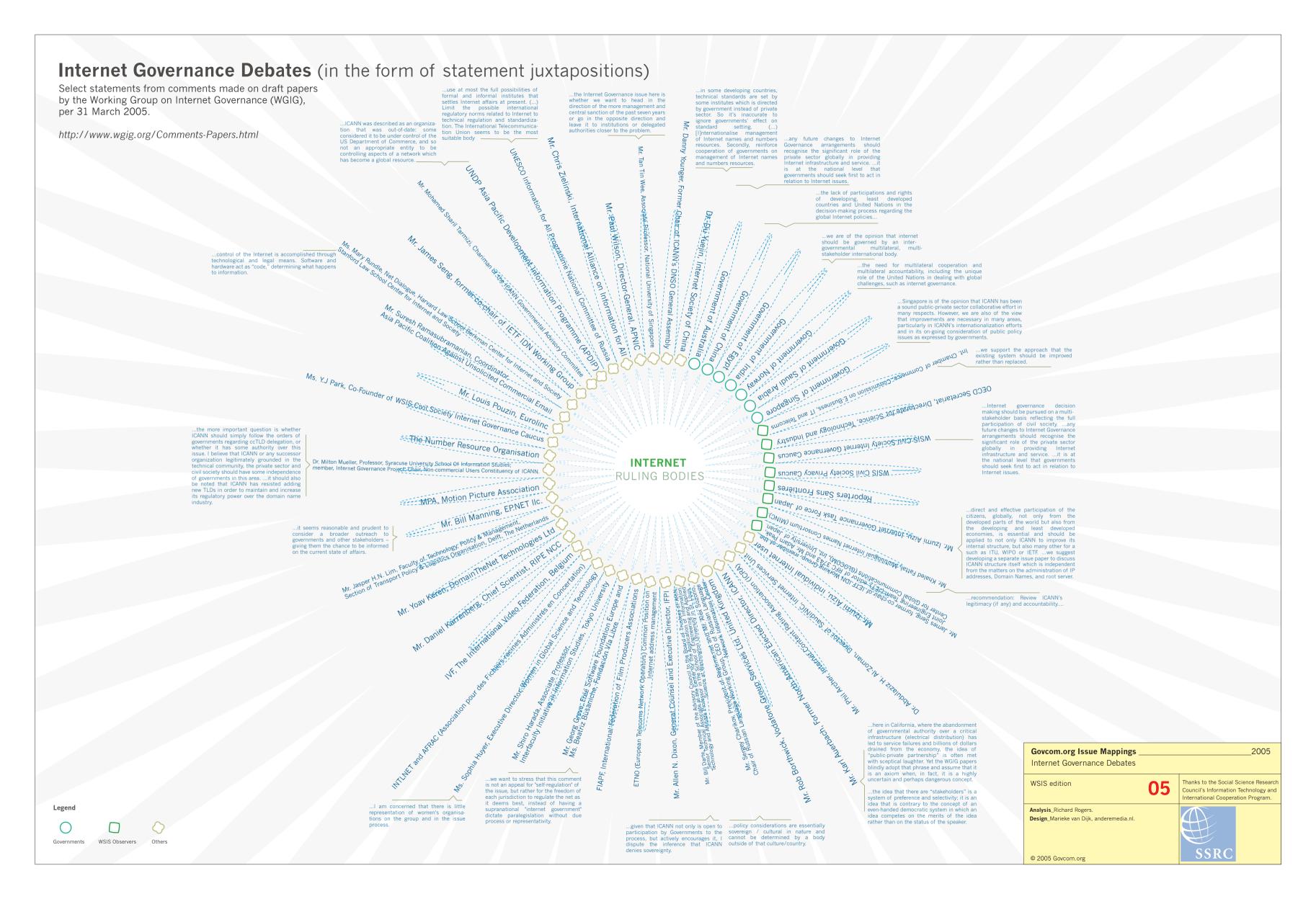
The WSIS network as it is disclosed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and its affiliates, equally shows us the prominence of hybrid issues in the summit's space. Here ICT appears as coupled with development. Moreover, juxtaposing the civil society and the ITU networks, we gain a sense of the kind of re-definition of the summit's issues that the civil society network is trying to accomplish. One can say that the respective ITU and civil society networks are contesting the kind of hybridization of ICT which the summit is to accomplish. But it is probably more pertinent to say that the civil society network is attempting to open up the issue of CT/development to rights and gender — to hybrize ICT even more. The question is, did they succeed?

Did civil society succeed in coupling ICT with rights and gender issues?

In order to give an answer to that question, we take a series of summit-related documents, and look for the presence of "rights" and "gender" in them. Gender was present in the compilation of statements from the first prepcom and rights in the declaration presented to the third prepcom. But in a more recent document, an unofficial declaration compiled by the president of the summit, both terms have disappeared. Instead of the uptake of the issues of civi society, the WSIS process has resulted in the editing out of these issues, at least as of October 2003. In the last document, only the term "civil society" is present, but not its issues. This could be read as implying that rather than involving civil society to participate in setting the agenda, the WSIS process involves civil society as an implicated actor, with no specific issues of its own.







Hyperlink Economy

Triangulated results of 'WWW' query in Google, Yahoo!, MSN and Teoma, 26 April 2005.

Google, Yahoo!, MSN and Teoma were selected for they are the only leading search engines that do not rely on other engines for primary and secondary results. See http://www.search-this.com/search_engine_decoder.asp.

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Triangulated results of 'WWW' query in Google, Yahoo!, MSN and Teoma, 28 February to 26 April 2005, with profiles of top actors from the categories: open source organizations, computer companies, search engine companies, non-computer companies, news companies, non-governmental organizations and governmental bodies.



