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*For administrative purposes only:*
Grounding the Global in the Everyday:

Connecting Perspectives on Internet Access and Socio-Economic Development in India

MC499 Dissertation, 2016
MSc Media, Communication and Development
Department of Media and Communications
London School of Economics and Political Science
Abstract

The following research explores the link between internet connectivity and socio-economic development, with a particular focus on the case of India. Its theoretical focus offers to connect debates in the fields of ICT for Development (ICT4D); Internet Governance; and International Relations, in order to explore how the socio-economic development promise of ICT4D is carried out. Three ‘disconnects’ are identified through the gaps in the literature, informing the conceptual framework operationalized in the empirical research. The conceptual framework supports the argument that in order to achieve progressive social change in internet governance, we need to turn our attention to ‘everyday actors’ and their role in mediating development. Connecting perspectives from actors engaging with issues of internet access and development at global, national and local levels, paves the way for a connectivity debate which grounds the global in the everyday. Each perspective, as argued throughout this paper, informs the debate with its unique considerations: from practical, to technical and policy challenges.

Phenomenological interviewing has been carried out in this research as a way of allowing space for interviewees to express their views, share their experiences, and voice their concern on the topic. This is in line with the social constructivist argument threading through the paper: that development is partly mediated by everyday actors. Indeed, findings point to three ‘endogenous connectors’ enacted by these actors in order to enable the realization of the ‘development’ potential of connectivity. These connectors come to complete the ICT4D value chain designed by Richard Heeks (2007; 2010) to suggest an explanation for the formerly unquestioned movement from internet access to outputs, outcomes, and development impact. The aim of this paper is to inform and invite further research which acknowledges the political implications at the intersection of connectivity and development.

Key words: Connectivity, Development, ICT4D, Internet Governance, Everyday Actors, India
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To Julia, Patricia and Serge, the Everyday Actors whose love and support has given me the strength to embark on this ambitious academic journey in 2011,
I will always be thankful.

“What can be contributed is not resolution but perhaps, at times, just that extra edge of consciousness”

Keywords, Raymond Williams (1976:21)
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Introduction

Internet governance, as pointed out by DeNardis, is a ‘contested space reflecting broader global power struggles’ (2004:222). According to DeNardis, the reality of the 21st century, is that internet governance has ‘expanded beyond operational governance functions’. Indeed, as internet access expands, so does the complexity and intersectionality constituting the realm of its governance.

The theoretical focus of this dissertation is posited at the intersection of internet access and socio-economic development, the empirical focus is the case of India. According to the latest World Bank Report, 1.063 billion people in India remain unconnected, which represents approximately half of the world’s ‘offline and missing out’ population (Digital Dividends, 2016:201).

India has recently been at the centre of a debate involving Facebook’s endeavours to connect its large unconnected population, free of charge, through a zero-rating platform called ‘Free Basics’. The platform, limiting internet access to only a few websites, was described as a ‘walled garden’: a closed ecosystem violating the open nature of the internet.

As a reaction, a civil society campaign known as the Save the Internet Campaign started across the country in April 2015, and sought to defend the principle of ‘Net Neutrality’. The concept, simply put, refers to the fact that all information should be equal on the internet (Wu, 2005; Bocache 2007; Powell & Cooper, 2011). In February 2016, the campaign successfully managed to get the Indian telecoms regulator to ban zero-rating services, including Facebook’s controversial ‘Free Basics’ platform (TRAI paper, 2016).

The Free Basics controversy is only ‘the tip of the iceberg’, and calls for further investigation on the link between internet connectivity and socio-economic development. Connectivity has indeed recently been put on the 2030 international development agenda as one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 9, target

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1 Zero-rating refers to discriminatory tariffs for data, it offers services free of charge
C). Internet access is expanding rapidly, it has undergone a 30% increase in users between 2015 and 2016 in India. A pace which does not leave much room for public debate on how, why, and who should be providing and ensuring access. This dissertation stresses the necessity to question our assumptions on the role of connectivity in development. A temptation to romanticize the intangible nature of the internet for socio-economic progress, coupled with the dangerous depoliticization of the development sector (Ferguson, 1994), is what is at stake in the rapid expansion of internet access.

The field of Media and Communications has a crucial role to play in framing the debate around connectivity. The ‘Network Society’ (Castells, 1996), Globalization (Tomlinson, 1994) and Cosmopolitanism (Beck & Levy, 2013) are running themes in the field, and theorize on the fact that ‘We’ are all connected. The concept of globalization, as argued by Shome and Hedge, ‘heralds a connected world of utopian possibilities – the ultimate dream of corporate slogans’ (2002:261). Indeed, Mark Zuckerberg, CEO and co-founder of a corporation that needs no introduction, declared in October 2014 during his visit to the village of Chandauli, in the Indian state of Rajasthan:

“One day, if we can connect every village, we can transform many more lives and improve the world for all of us. Chandauli is just the start.” (Zuckerberg in Bhatia, 2016)

It is this kind of thinking that the following research seeks to problematize. The ambition of this paper is to take a step back, and observe how media and communications contemporary debates around connectivity in developing countries, intersect with global politics. This dissertation is concerned with what happens, ‘behind the veneers of a seamless globe’ (Shome & Hedge, 2002:261), when connectivity meets development.

The object at the heart of investigation throughout this research, is the theoretical link between ICTs and socio-economic development, as explored by Richard Heeks (2007; 2010). The conceptual framework identified for critical appraisal seeks to explore some of the debates in the fields of ICT for Development (hereafter ICT4D); Internet

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2 Source: Internet Live Stats, 2016. The figure presented here needs to be moderated with a 1.3% population increase between 2015 and 2016. The total penetration of internet users in India as of 2016 is 34.8%.
Governance; and International Relations (hereafter IR). The argument emerging from this multi-disciplinary conversation is the need to inform a connectivity debate with a perspective that is both global and grounded in the everyday.

The operationalization of the conceptual framework, through a qualitative study in conversation with ‘Everyday Actors’, reveals the endogenous factors missing in Heeks’ ICT4D value chain. Three factors have been identified from the research findings, I will refer to them as ‘endogenous connectors’:

(1) Building consensus
(2) Balancing economic optimism
(3) Mitigating challenges

These ‘endogenous connectors’ emerge from the superposition of perspectives from individuals engaging with issues of internet access at different levels, and informs the role of these individuals as mediating the ‘social’ aspect at the heart of the development process.

What this paper seeks to highlight, is the need to balance technological and social determinism through questioning our assumptions about the relation between development and connectivity. The ambition of this paper is to contribute to designing a lens through which any connectivity-related issue, from fixed internet access, to mobile internet, and wifi-balloon, can be critically analysed, whatever future technological advancements may entail.
Theoretical Chapter

The following theoretical chapter is an attempt to bridge aspects of different disciplines in order to inform a multi-disciplinary conversation on the expansion of internet access in developing countries. This dissertation will borrow from strands of Development Studies (ICT4D), Media and Communications Studies (Internet Governance), and International Relations (Everyday International Political Economy). As such, this chapter establishes itself in line with Richard Heeks’ argument for stronger connections between the various disciplinary foundations for the study of the relation between ICTs and socio-economic development (c.f appendix 8).

This theoretical chapter will lay out the context from which the research question carried out in the empirical study emerges. Therefore, the following chapter seeks to be broad, inclusive, and to foster a dialogue between disciplines. The focus of the empirical study will then be presented in the methodology section of this dissertation.

Through a review of some of the debates in ICT4D, Internet Governance, and IR, this chapter endeavours to tackle the following questions:

- What kind of development comes after internet access has been provided?
- Can global internet governance provide a ‘social’ framework?
- Who are the agents of change in IR? And why should we be asking ‘who acts’ instead of ‘who governs’?

Through connecting these questions, an argument will emerge regarding the need to identify what is missing from Heeks’ attempt to conceptualize the ‘ICT4D value chain’ (c.f annex 9). Identifying the gaps in the literature will tease out the missing links holding the chain together. Hence informing the relation between ICTs and socio-economic development, and paving the way for further research on this topic.

As a point of clarification, ‘ICT’, Information Communications Technology, in this chapter is broadly conceived as including internet access as one of its fundamental components. The terms ‘connectivity’ and ‘internet access’ will be used interchangeably. The need to nuance these terms calls for further investigation.
ICT 4 for what kind of D?

Although fairly nascent, the ICT4D literature is already pointing to a series of tensions between different models, discourses, and ideological conceptions of development. The following paragraphs present three of these tensions related to: models of development, conceptions of knowledge, and the muddling of ICT access and use. Problematizing these three points of contention will hint at some of the underlying debates in the field: Why should providing internet access be a development priority? What constitutes the field of ICT4D, and where is the field heading in terms of research?

Exogenous/Endogenous development

The first tension highlighted here has been explored by Robin Mansell (2011), who interrogates the contemporary development discourse in ICT4D, by pointing to its ‘Western-centric and universalist model of economic growth and development’ (2011:110). Through an analysis of the UN and World Bank reports, Mansell identifies and argues against the interventionist, ‘exogenous’ model of development informing ICT4D policies, discourse and practice.

In the social sciences, and more particularly in economics, the term ‘exogenous’ refers to a phenomenon having an external cause. According to Mansell, this predominant development model is used to justify interventions aimed at the use of new technologies to boost economic growth in developing countries. Contrariwise, ‘endogenous’ development refers to a phenomenon having an internal cause, in other words: ‘development from within’ or ‘bottom-up’ development, as commonly referred to in the field. Mansell argues that ICT4D interventions need to be better aligned with endogenous ‘human development goals’.

These two conceptions of development can be paralleled with what Mansell distinguishes as the two social imaginaries of the ‘Internet Age’: one focusing on the relationship between economic growth and technological change, whilst the other being concerned with technological change and human agency (2001: 176). It is the latter that this dissertation seeks to explore.
Knowledge/Power game

This tension between exogenous and endogenous development both illustrates and impacts the way knowledge is conceived in ICT4D interventions. The exogenous, neoclassical approach to ICT4D, as Mansell argues, is problematic in the way it suggests that ‘knowledge is like light’ (2011:210): ‘weightless and intangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere’ (World Bank, 1999 in Mansell 2011:1), a conception of knowledge that is silent about the asymmetries of power embedded in the technology.

In an attempt to link ICTs and development discourse, Schech (2002) argues that ICT4D ‘modernization discourses’ stem from the assumption that a ‘deficiency in knowledge is responsible for underdevelopment’ (2002:14). It needs to be acknowledged here, that one should be careful not to jump to the assumption that modernization discourses only emanate from exogenous development thinking. This idea that ‘knowledge is like light’ is indeed characteristic of the modernization paradigm, however, it can also be identified in other development paradigms, such as the conceptually fuzzy ‘participatory model’ which ICTs are often equated with (Banaji, 2015; Chambers, 2005; Dervin & Huesca, 1997). The development studies literature indeed calls for an attention to the complex relationship between discourse, knowledge and power (Escobar, 1995:10; Hall, 1997; Foucault, 1980) which makes development interventions so difficult to assess.

Schech (2002) argues for an alternative way of looking at ICTs, one which acknowledges the tight relationship between knowledge, communication and development. Highlighting knowledge as a potential site of resistance, Schech stresses that what ICT4D research needs is a broader approach to knowledge. Not as flowing from ‘the Global North’ to ‘the Global South’, but instead drawing on local and regional knowledge in order to ‘understand the multiplicity of knowledge production’ (2002:22). In other words, the field of ICT4D hints towards the politics of knowledge production.

ICT4D value chain

Richard Heeks argues that ‘infrastructure and access are only a starting point’ (2010:2). Indeed, he makes a distinction between ‘upstream’ and ‘downstream’
development by designing a ‘value chain’ (2010:3; c.f appendix 9), in which he identifies four resources and processes: readiness (infrastructure); availability (access), uptake (actual usage), and impact. Heeks argues that our attention should be focused on impact, which he divides into three stages: outputs (micro-level behavioral changes); outcomes (wider costs and benefits); and development impacts (contribution to broader development goals). Such an attempt to theorize the link between ICTs and socio-economic development is useful in terms of identifying key stages, however, it is important to keep in mind that this compartmentalization is only a theoretical tool. Infrastructure, availability, uptake and impact should not be separately analysed. Indeed, when it comes to providing internet access, questions of ‘effective use’ have to be raised.

Jonathan Donner’s book ‘After Access’ (2016) introduces this idea of ‘effective use’, a lens inviting for a qualitative, rather than quantitative, assessment of ICT4D interventions. Donner indeed asks the following question: what happens ‘After Access’ has been provided? His argument is two-fold: firstly, access (in Donner’s example, to mobile internet), does not necessarily translate into use. Secondly, that ‘even as use spreads widely around the world, we need to account for a greater, more stratified, heterogeneity of Internet experiences’ (2016:51).

Sey and Ortoleva (2014) also invite us to consider the multiplicity of internet experiences, by raising the question of ‘work and play’ and highlighting the entertainment value of ICTs. The authors draw an interesting link between affordances, ‘the perceived and actual properties of things’ (Donner, 2016:54), and the ‘myth’ associated with the medium itself (Sey & Ortoleva, 2014:9) - i.e the internet spreading ‘knowledge like light’.

Accounting for ‘effective use’ thus raises the question of what one considers to be ‘effective’ for development. Dorothea Kleine’s case study of Chile (2013), for instance, rests on a conception of development based on Amartya Sen’s ‘capabilities approach’ of ‘Development as Freedom’ (1999). Efficiency here, is considered in terms of successfully enhancing people’s capabilities to make choices, one of the many conceptions of ‘development’.
The First Disconnect

This set of three unresolved tensions between different development models; conceptions of knowledge; and the muddling of access and use; reveals the absence of theoretically founded debates in the ICT4D literature. Indeed, critiques of the ICT4D field presented above, shed light on a lack of attention to the field of development studies and its highly political implications. Some of the implications at stake have been identified in this brief review of the literature as: human agency; the politics of knowledge production; and the heterogeneity of experiences. This gap in the ICT4D literature is what I will hereafter refer to as ‘The First Disconnect’.

Global Internet Governance

The critical Political Economy (PE) approach to communications studies, according to Mosco, is the study of ‘the power relations that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources’ (1996:25). Such approach to media and communications challenges the essentialist tendency of the field ‘to reduce reality to the discipline’s central constituents’ – i.e the media (Mosco, 1996:70). The PE approach posits to ‘decenter’ the field (Mosco, 1996:71), from a focus on the system of communication (i.e the internet), to ‘the broader economic, political, social and cultural processes in society’ (i.e internet governance). The scope of this project does not allow for thorough investigation in the economics of ‘the Information Society’, or issues of ownership and finance, which would satisfy a PE approach to the topic. As such, it will only point to some of the debates at the institutional level, in order to start identifying where power interests diverge.

This short review of the literature will be addressing the following question: can global internet governance provide a social framework? First, by briefly outlining the historical context for the rise of the ‘Information Society’ internet governance seeks to govern. Second, by stressing what makes a social framework difficult to achieve in internet governance: information as both a technology of production and of communication. Thirdly, by briefly assessing how ‘civil society’ has attempted to put forward a ‘people-
centred' agenda in the WSIS forum 2003. The argument unfolding in the below section rests on the idea of a link between technology and the ‘social’ element as clarified by Sheila Jasanoff:

“Technology embeds and is embedded in social practices identities, norms, conventions, discourses, instruments and institutions – in short, in all the building blocks of what we term the social.” (Jasanoff in DeNardis, 2014:8)

First and foremost, it needs to be acknowledged that the focus on the global nature of internet governance processes is a deliberate choice. The literature on internet governance in the Indian context is indeed very sparse and focused on e-governance (Pardhasaradhi, 2009; Yadav, 2012). Furthermore, internet governance has traditionally been written about as something happening ‘beyond the nation state’ (Cammaerts, 2008), in the international institutional realm. The term ‘internet governance’ refers to how the development of the internet is managed. The expression ‘Information Society’ is understood as making internet-related issues a central concern.

Information Society and Neoliberalism

To fully retrace the history of the rise of the ‘Information Society’ paradigm would be a topic for another paper. Hence, the following paragraphs will focus on the period from the 1980s to the 2000s, highlighting key events to shed light on the historical context of neoliberal driven politics influencing global internet governance today.

O Siochru (2004) contextualizes the rise of the ‘Information Society’ in the 80s and 90s political landscape under the mandate of Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and Ronald Reagan in the US. Both politicians enacting a historical move towards privatization and liberalization of the telecommunications sector. The term ‘Information Society’ itself was then strategically employed by the European Commission in policy papers such as the White Paper (1993), or the Bangemann Report and its Action Plan (1994) to provide a ‘social gloss’ to its liberalization policies (O Siochru, 2004:205-6). O Siochru’s critique invites us to reflect on the fact that the term ‘Information Society’ has emerged and evolved through a Western institutional context.
The 1996 WTO GATS Agreement on Telecommunications marked the transformation of the ‘Information Society’ from a US/European neoliberal discourse apparatus, to a ‘global paradigm’ (O Siochru, 2004:206). The World Summit on the Information Society (hereafter WSIS) 2003/05 confirmed the global appeal of the Information Society as a central concept in global internet governance. One of the many criticisms attached to the WSIS agenda and outcomes, as outlined by Mansell and Nordenstreng (2006), was that the ITU (lead organization in the WSIS forum) pushed to satisfy the demands of those whose interests were aligned with its own. Leading to a focus on ICTs market expansion to the developing world, rather than addressing the socio-economic concerns of developing countries (Mansell & Nordenstreng, 2006:204). A detailed critical engagement with developing countries engagement in the WSIS forum can be found in Souter (2007).

Technologies of Production v.s Communication

Further attention to critical comments on the WSIS process brings forward an interesting clash of two different conceptions of the media from the perspective of the UNESCO on the one hand, and the ITU on the other (co-organizing the forums). Raboy puts it in the following way:

“Within the UNESCO logic, media are cultural institutions, part of the process of human development. Within the ITU logic, media are technical systems for information delivery” (Raboy in Cammaerts 2008:104)

According to Cammaerts (2008:104), this distinction has consequences on how issues are perceived and addressed in the context of global internet governance forums such as the WSIS. Anita Gurumurthy, also highlights this tension, which she describes as a ‘healthy tension’ between technologies of production, and technologies of information and communication - between ‘the classical economic discourse, and socio-political thinking’ (2007:11).

This tension, she argues, calls for an assessment of the impact of capitalism on communities, a movement away from the centralizing tendencies of a single ‘Networked’ (reference to Castells, 1996) or ‘Information’ Society, to an attention to the
impact of the global capitalist systems on the margins. Understanding the political economy of the ‘dominant information society paradigm’, according to Gurumurthy, is necessary in order to understand the simultaneous process of ‘global consolidation and local abdication’ under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism (2007:12).

The clash between two different conceptions of the media as a technology of production and communication has been identified here as the factor freezing global internet governance somewhere in between ‘capitalist utopia’ and ‘social dystopia’ (Gurumurthy, 2007:20). Indeed, it posits the neoliberal forces of the market in opposition to a social justice framework for the so-called ‘Information Society’.

Human Needs in Internet Governance

Acknowledging the tension presented above should be thought of as the first step towards recovering the ‘social’ element. This can be done through an attention to counter-discourses at the institutional level. Therefore, the following paragraph draws attention to the Civil Society Declaration for Human Needs (hereafter CSDHN) stemming from the WSIS process 2003. The scope of this project does not allow for a full engagement with the paper, however, I will present its highlights.

The paper has been compiled and unanimously adopted by the WSIS Civil Society Plenary on the 8th of December 2003. The concept of Civil Society here, is defined as: ‘women and men from different continents, cultural backgrounds, perspectives, experiences and expertise, acting as an emerging global civil society’ (CSDHN, 2003:2) The paper challenges the Information Society paradigm, by making ‘Information Societies for Human Needs’ central to their claims. What is meant by human needs is: ‘social justice and people-centered sustainable development’ (2003:3).

The declaration argues for a rejection of the ‘solely profit-motivated and market-propelled promotion of ICTs for development’ (2003:7). Instead, it states that ‘ICT development and applications should be oriented to advance the social, economic and
cultural progress’ (2003:7). The ‘core principles and challenges’ (2003:5) covered in the document are:

- Social Justice and People-Centered Sustainable Development
- The centrality of Human Rights
- Culture, Knowledge and Public Domain
- Enabling Environment

This set of priorities is what I refer to as the ‘social’ element. The thread identified in the paper is the desire to promote an internet governance agenda based on a social justice framework. It concludes that:

“It is people who primarily form and shape societies, and information and communications societies are no exception” (2003:23)

A glance at the CSDHN informs us that the ‘social’ element in global internet governance seems to be carried out by civil society actors. By ‘reclaiming development’ throughout the declaration, civil society establishes the link between ICT4D and the Information Society paradigm. Civil Society posits itself here as the default actor carrying out the ‘social’ element through processes of internet governance.

The Second Disconnect

Attention to some of the debates at the institutional level points to a tension between two conceptions of the media: as technologies of production/communication. Internet governance, I argue here, needs to be looked at through the lens of political economy, in order to fully grasp how this power tension affects governance outcomes. Questions of ownership and finance should be addressed in further research, and linked back to development. The tension identified here can inform a PE approach as the critical point where interests of different actors diverge.

This unaddressed tension is the gap in the literature, what I hereafter refer to as ‘The Second disconnect’, and where resides potential for internet governance to carry out the development aspect identified in the ICT4D literature. Indeed, as pointed out by Gurumurthy, the changes brought about by the Information Society are ‘profound and
far reaching’, and therefore offer the possibility for ‘reclaiming development’ (2007:20). The civil society actor is introduced here as an agent of change.

International Relations and Social Change

The following section will explore the possibility for ‘reclaiming development’ through international institutions. Arguing that theories of International Relations have thus far theorized on the compliant nature of the international institutional system, thus inhibiting potential for political and social change (Richmond, 2011:421). This reasoning comes to complete the puzzle that is the relationship between ICTs and socio-economic development, by questioning the very possibility of bringing about change in the international system. As such, it modestly hints towards the structure/agency debate in the social sciences, but will not engage with its specifics.

By placing the multi-stakeholder process characterizing global internet governance in the realm of IR where it belongs, this section introduces the critique of the civil society actor as a stakeholder, rather than a political actor. The argument emerging from this critique is that attention should be paid to what Hobson and Seabrooke (2007) call the ‘Everyday Actor’, in order to reveal blind spots of agency. The underlying argument resurfacing in the conclusion, is that this unexplored site of agency is where individuals engaged at the intersection of internet governance and development (e.g dealing with issues of internet access in developing countries), can act.

The overarching question of this section, straightforwardly put, is: where do we look for progressive social change in IR?

Multi-Stakeholderism in IR

As highlighted by Cammaerts ‘IR theory has a long legacy, ridden with grand debates’ (2008:47), the most contested of which is the debate between utopians (or liberals) and realists. Utopians are traditionally associated with ‘ideals, international law,
interdependence, co-operation and peace’, whilst realists are concerned with ‘power and interests, the state autonomy, and the frequent occurrence of war’ (2008:48).

In an attempt to overcome this dichotomy, Cammaerts introduces the postinternational theory of Rosenau (1990), which identifies an overlap between the state-centric world of realists, and the multi-centric world of utopians. It is in this overlapping space for ‘mutual recognition’ (Cammaerts, 2008:50) of both world views, that a multi-stakeholder approach to processes of global governance (such as internet governance) can be explained. According to Rosenau’s theory, states accept that they do not have complete control, and non-state actors accept that it is almost impossible to achieve their aims without the support of states. Hence, both are bound to accept co-operation through multi-stakeholderism.

It should be pointed here, that multi-stakeholder processes are fraught with theoretical debates over consensual and conflictual approaches in political and democratic theory (Cammaerts, 2008:55). From ideological debates underpinning IR theory (i.e utopians v.s realists), to debates in democratic theory (i.e rationality/passion, public sphere). These debates translate into practical challenges such as levels of participation and inclusiveness, which have been the focus of most of the literature on civil society engagement with internet governance (Chenou, 2011; Hintz, 2006; Souter, 2004; Cammaerts, 2010).

Who is Civil Society anyways?

According to Mary Kaldor, civil society, although a modern concept, can be traced back to Aristotle (2003:584). Antonio Gramsci is the thinker who is most associated with the 20th century definition of civil society as occupying a space outside the market, the state, and the family. This space is described by Kaldor as ‘the realm of culture, ideology and political debate’ (2003:584). Kaldor argues that civil society has always had a normative and a descriptive content, which makes it difficult to account for its presence when moving from theory to practice (2003:588). According to Kaldor:

“In practice, in actually existing civil society, it is almost impossible to draw boundaries between who is included and who is excluded” (2003:590)
The idea of a Global Civil Society emerged in the 1990s, it is commonly associated with the ‘public element’ of global governance processes (Kaldor, 2003:590). I argue here that the ‘emancipatory idea’ (Kaldor, 2003:592) attached to civil society, seems to have contributed to a romanticising of the concept. Civil society is indeed generally conceived as seeking to ‘break hegemony, discourses, uncover and criticize power and domination’ (Downing in Hintz 2007:245). In the case of internet governance, as shown in the previous section, civil society is seen as the default actor of social change. However, as argued by its critiques, civil society is almost impossible to account for. Richmond draws an interesting parallel between the agency of civil society in IR and ‘dark matter’ in physics: ‘unnoticed, yet fundamental to the structure of the universe’ (Richmond, 2011: 434).

The concept of a global civil society has indeed been widely criticized in the literature (Hardt, 1995; Nicholls, 2011; Fowler, 2013). Richmond, for instance, argues that civil society ‘has tried to maintain disciplinary legitimacy, but in fact has excluded many’ (2011:425). He further argues for the existence, and resistance capacity of a different kind of civil society, which he calls ‘post-colonial civil society’. Additional reflections on the usefulness of the concept in a non-Western context can be found in Lewis (2001).

Cammaerts (2008; 2010; 2011), who wrote extensively on the topic, invites us to nuance our understanding of the civil society actor in multi-stakeholder processes of internet governance (2008). Indeed, a distinction should be made between civil society as a stakeholder involved in forums, and civil society as a political actor, an actor of change. The following argument will drive us through the last section of this chapter.

**Social Constructivism and Everyday Actors**

The missing link in order to move from ‘stakeholder’ to ‘political actor’, I argue here, is the notion of agency. If the institutional focus in IR theory (i.e multi-stakeholderism) has not been able to account for agency, where then, should we be looking for it?

The argument building up throughout this chapter comes together through an alternative way of thinking about progressive change in IR. This potential for change arises from a critique of RIPE (Regulatory International Political Economy), a sub-field

Hobson and Seabrook trace back the birth of RIPE in the US during the 1970s, at a time when the world economy was going into recession (2007:5). The field of IR, dominated by the neoliberalist school of thought, was concerned with how to restore world order and economic growth, and informed the question ‘who governs?’. Later on, the discipline found itself highly influenced by the structuralist school who was concerned with the question ‘who benefits?’, pointing to the dynamics between the core and the periphery, the ‘Global North’ and the ‘Global South’. The structuralists were criticized for ‘reifying the global structure’ (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007:7), and inhibiting the possibility of a bottom-up agency. A detailed summary can be found in the appendix (10).

Hobson and Seabrooke challenge the benefits of asking ‘who governs?’ and ‘who benefits?’ in IR, and instead invite us to ask the question ‘who acts?’. This question derives from an over concern with ‘how to keep order’ traditionally observed in IR. Hobson and Seabrooke argue that we ought to be asking ‘how to achieve change?’ instead.

The Third Disconnect

‘The Third Disconnect’ refers to the under theorization of agency in the IR literature, and turns our attention to the everyday actor:

“We extend these analyses to show how everyday actors shape not only the ‘big and important things’ (i.e., affecting the governance of the global economy) but also shape the ‘many small but important things’ (i.e., effecting change in the local, national, regional, international and global contexts)” (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007:12)

It is in this space, the realm of the everyday, that the rest of this paper will take place. The empirical research carried out in the chapters to come will investigate how everyday actors dealing with issues of internet access and development at different level seek to reclaim development.
Before moving on to methodological considerations, it needs to be acknowledged that the social constructivist lens of the ‘Everyday Actor’ comes as an extension of traditional IR theory, and does not seek to replace it.

Conceptual Framework

The first piece of this theoretical puzzle has focused on the literature on ICT4D, and revealed tensions in the link between ICTs and Development. It identifies this series of unresolved tensions as ‘the 1st Disconnect’.

The second piece, hinting at the Political Economy of Communication, has focused on global processes of internet governance, and problematized the potential for a social framework carried out by ‘civil society’. It identifies the unexplored tension between ICTs as technologies of production and communication as ‘the 2nd Disconnect’.

The literature on International Relations, and a particular focus on the strand of EIPE, adds the missing piece of the puzzle in concluding that an attention to the everyday actor is necessary. It identifies the under theorization of agency in IR as ‘the 3rd Disconnect’.

These three disconnects taken together, constitute the argument carried out throughout this dissertation: the need to ground the global in the everyday. The research question hypothesizing this argument is the following:

How do everyday actors engaging with issues of internet access and development from different perspectives (global, national, local) conceive the role of internet access in the socio-economic development of India?

- Sub-question 1: What is the missing thread in the ICT4D value chain?
- Sub-question 2: Do individuals engaged at different levels have different assumptions about the role of internet access in development?
- Sub-question 3: What are the connections and disconnections observed? Points of contention, or opportunities for enhanced dialogue between these three analytical levels of engagement?
- Sub-question 4: As internet access is expanding to developing countries, where do we look for progressive change in internet governance?
Research Objectives

In answering the aforementioned research questions, I hope to reveal the potential which lies in reconnecting different perspectives. Both through the multidisciplinary approach of the literature review, and the multi-level approach of the empirical study.

The three disconnects identified in this theoretical chapter will be reconnected in the empirical chapter through combining the perspectives from everyday actors engaged with issues of internet access and development at the local (group L); national (group N); and global (group G) levels.

Through connecting these perspectives, I hope to identify the missing links necessary to foster a progressive and meaningful conversation on issues of internet access and development in India, where the research gap is to be filled.

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**Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework**

- **ICT4D - Communication for Development**
  - 1st Disconnect:
    - Lack of attention to:
      - Human agency
      - Politics of knowledge production
      - Heterogeneity of internet experiences
  - Promise of development

- **INTERNET GOVERNANCE - PE of Communication**
  - 2nd Disconnect:
    - Unexplored tension between technologies of production/communication

- **EVERYDAY IPE - International Relations**
  - 3rd Disconnect:
    - Undertheorization of agency in IR, overly focused on institutions
  - Role of the 'Everyday Actor'

'Civil Society' reclaiming development through international institutions?
Research Design and Methodology

Research Strategy

Pilot Research

“If you want a thing to stand, it has to be able to fall” (Powers in Latour 2003:1)

In order to accompany the reader through an understanding of the approach adopted in this research paper, it is necessary to provide some background on the evolution of the project itself, and how it took shape over the academic year.

In March/April 2016, the project was piloted on a smaller scale in order to test for its methodological implications. Three interviews were conducted with ‘civil society actors’ whose identities, relative to the topic, are briefly summarized in the appendix (3). The conversations were very fruitful, and the data gathered enabled me to get a sense of the complex landscape of internet governance. The broad research question allowed for broad themes to emerge and give direction and focus to the further research which is presented in this paper. Data gathered from the pilot and informing a different (broader) research question will not be presented in the analysis. However, it needs to be acknowledged that these three interviews highly contributed to background knowledge and problematizing of the research, as well as methodological reflexivity.

This first engagement with the research strategy gave me the chance to identify and explore the methodological literature informing the implementation of this project. The rationale supporting the research strategy of the pilot thus stands stronger and all the more justified for this final project.

Phenomenological Approach

“Interpretations, not facts or laws” (Gubrium & Holstein 2001:83)

The methodological tool centre-piece to this project derives from the constructivist tradition of phenomenology in the social sciences. It is concerned with the actions and activities of individuals, their everyday life and the context in which they operate:
“Phenomenology is about trying to see how things in the world look from the point of view of the people one is studying.” (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012:86)

Considered ‘richer in terms of nuances and depth’ (England, 2012:27), the method of interviewing has been identified as the most appropriate method of data gathering in phenomenological research (Lester, 1999; England, 2012; Bevan, 2014). The ‘phenomenological attitude’ outlined by Bevan (2014: 139) and summarized in the appendix presents methodological insights for researchers on how to structure phenomenological interviewing. These were adopted as guidelines throughout the project. For instance, questions beginning with ‘Tell me about…’ (c.f appendix 11) were favoured in the interviews as an introductory mechanism allowing for people’s ‘lifeworld’ (Bevan, 2014:137) to naturally emerge from the conversation.

i.e ‘Tell me about your organization and the work that you do on a daily basis’ (c.f appendix 5)

Moreover, an effort has been sustained by the researcher to: accept the natural attitude of participants; be reflexive and critical with oneself; listen actively (Bevan, 2014:139). These ‘pillars’ were used as ethical guidelines informing the process of research throughout.

‘Connectivity’ Research

The vastness, interdisciplinarity and intersectionality of the topic of internet access calls for a variety of methodological approaches. The ‘connectivity’ research field being nascent, any approach to the topic would contribute to adding substance to the debate.

For instance, this research could have been a critical discourse analysis of documents stemming from the WSIS, the UN SGD forum, or the latest WTO Report on ‘Digital Dividends’ analysing (or comparing) how the connectivity discourse emerges at the international institution level. Alternatively, it could have been a content analysis of Facebook’s propaganda to promote Free Basics in India. These hypothetical research paths would, and hopefully will, be contributing to opening up a conversation about the implications of ‘connecting the next billion’ (The Economic Times, 2015), from different
perspectives, and informed by different methodological insights. As rightly pointed out by Duncker (in Bauer and Gaskall, 2000: 3), there is no ‘one best way’ of undertaking research. This underlines the richness and potential of the topic itself, which offers a wide range of possibilities for further research.

The choice of methodology, informed by the constructivist approach outlined in the paragraphs above, should be read as making a statement in media and communications research. Traditionally interested in how hegemony is constructed through the media, the field has arguably been focused on identifying patterns of continuity which can be coded or identified in a body of text. Through the use of phenomenology, this research seeks to allow for the expression of different ways of being, doing, and resisting embodied in people themselves. As pointed out by Lester, phenomenological qualitative research, such as the one carried out in this paper, is good at ‘making voices heard’ (Lester 1999:4). It is therefore a fitting method for any research concerned with the notion of agency.

**Negotiating the ‘Space Between’**

The (cyber) space between, associated with the technical challenges arising when conducting research over Skype, has been reflexively explored in the pilot study, with reference to the methodological literature, and will not be further developed here. Although it needs to be acknowledged that the ‘synchronous environments’ discussed in Sullivan (2013: 55) were not successfully achieved in one of the interviews, due to technological issues. The quality of the data was thus partly affected, but did not impinge on the overall analysis.

The main challenge encountered in this study, was learning how to deal with ‘the space between’ (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) the interviewees and myself, as non-familiar with the Indian context. This recurrent theme in the qualitative research literature is usually framed through the insider/outsider dilemma. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) challenge this dichotomy by pointing to a ‘space between’ allowing researchers to occupy the position of both insider and outsider.
During one of the interviews, my knowledge about the internet governance landscape of India was explicitly questioned, which encouraged me to critically evaluate the breadth and depth of the project I was embarking on. Moreover, it led me to reflect on the fact that I was doing research on a country I had never been to, and therefore experiencing the specifics of it through the voices of the interviewees. From geography, to governance structure, historical context and internet governance landscape – I had no reference point but the ones found in academic research and conversations. The bias I had to overcome, was therefore an academically informed ‘neutral’ position.

The dialectical approach offered by Dwyer and Buckle helped me to find this ‘space between’ as both non-familiar with the Indian context, and non-expert in the professional fields of development and internet governance. This was achieved through an appreciation for ‘the fluidity and multi-layered complexity of human experience’, implying that membership to a group does not denote either complete sameness or complete difference (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009:60). This was also overcome through a sense of curiosity leading me to seek for more information and carry out further research.

Additional considerations on the positionality of the researcher with regards to interviewing ‘civil society’ actors have been reflexively approached and informed by the relevant literature (Lynch, 2008).

Methods and Procedures

Sampling

Sampling was operationalized through a ‘two-waves’ snowballing effect from the pilot respondents, who were themselves approached through a snowballing effect from personal encounters in the field. Research and outreach through the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) led me to one of the organizations. Individuals were approached on the basis of their engagement or research interest with issues of internet connectivity both in India (grassroots and national levels), and globally.
The number of interviews secured did not meet the expectations of reaching five respondents from the three identified levels. However, when conducting the analysis, I judged the number and substance of the seven interviews sufficient to allow for different perspectives to surface from the data. Moreover, the two main differential factors (listed below) of the interviews conducted did not affect research objectives:

- Individuals being part of an organization/researchers attached to an institute
- Having two/three interviews for each analytical level

Indeed, the ‘level factor’ on the basis of which interviewees were sampled was applied as a way of connecting perspectives, rather than a comparative tool. Failure to reach certain key organizations in the field of ICT for Development was a frustration, but did not impede the research. Especially given the fact that these organizations had already contributed and informed the research through the pilot (c.f appendix 3).

A lack of funding opportunities needs to be modestly acknowledged as limiting the scope of this project. The project was originally anticipated as a fieldwork study amongst one of the organizations identified as the object of study. This limit, however, has been a valuable factor in compromising the frame of this research as bridging global, national, and local perspectives.

**Design of Research Tools**

Seven qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted over the period of July the 18th to July 27th, and lasted between 30 minutes and an hour. Five interviews took place over Skype, two were face-to-face. No data was rejected, although some interviews were more fruitful than others, and thus may be more apparent in the analysis.

An ethics consent form was discussed with and signed by my supervisor before proceeding to the interviews. Prior to the interviews, respondents were sent three documents as part of the formal process of conducting research ethically: a participant information sheet, an informed consent form (c.f appendix 4), and an audio recording.
consent form. Participants were reminded of the interview via email a day before, and it was made clear that I would remain available before and after the interview for any questions or clarification regarding the research. In some instances, an email of clarification was requested, in which I explained that the purpose of my research was to build a conversation, rather than to collect fact-based information on the topic. The topic guide indeed illustrates the open-ended nature of the questions asked during the interviews (c.f appendix 5) and advocated by Bevan (2014:137), so as to allow for participants to express their views extensively.

Verbal consent regarding the implications of the research was accorded by all interviewees, but for the purpose of the analysis unfolding in the below chapter, the identity of the respondents will be displayed as their initials (c.f appendix 1). Each interview was recorded with two different devices, saved and backed up. Interviews were then transcribed, summarized and analysed in a systematic manner. A summary of the step undertaken for the thematic analysis can be found in the appendix (7). Thematic analysis, as defined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane refers to a ‘form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become categories for analysis’ (2006:4). The map-making approach of ‘key-word-in-context’ (Guest, 2012) was adopted in order to segment the interviews according to key words/themes such as: development, private sector, access, challenges. This facilitated the exploration of ‘similarity, dissimilarity and relationships’ (Guest, 2012:50) in the data, in order to connect perspectives.

The software Nvivo was explored and used as a data-management tool, rather than a tool to carry out the analysis itself. The software offered several options for a quantitative analysis of textual content (e.g charts, graphs, percentages), however, the purpose of my research was to analyse how people talked about a certain topic, rather than how much.
Case Study: Connectivity in India

The scope of this dissertation cannot do justice to the complex history of India, nor to its contemporary politics. However, some context is needed in order to accompany the reader through the empirical analysis. This brief summary has been informed by conversations with interviews, and through independent research.

The following timeline covers the period from 1995 to 2016, and highlights major events related to media and communications. However, it needs to be acknowledged that a number of other contextual factors matter, including (but not limited to): the societal structure; the governance structure; demographics; geography; geopolitics; history; and linguistics, and should be taken into account would this research be carried out on a more specific, or a larger scale. Furthermore, it has to be noted that the events reported below are not meant to be fully representative of the connectivity debate in India, but should be read as highlights. A detailed account of the internet governance landscape in India can be read in a report by Jain (2015).

15th August 1995
VNSL introduces public internet access in India
10000 internet users were added in 6th months

2011
National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) project initiated by the government to provide broadband connectivity to the Gram Panchayats

April 2015
Civil society backlash to internet.org, start of the Save the Internet Campaign

8th February 2016
TRAI decision to ban over the top services, Facebook’s Free Basics in banned

2000
Beginning of cable internet

10th February 2015
Facebook launches Internet.org platform in India (later renamed Free Basics)

2nd July 2015
Government launches the ‘Digital India’ campaign to create digital infrastructure and foster digital literacy

Figure 2: Connectivity Timeline India 1995-2016
Results and Interpretation

The first layer of analysis pointed to different conceptions of development by respondents engaged at different levels: a trend from concrete experience, to aspirations when moving from local to global ‘units of analysis’. Indeed, whilst individuals from group L (local) referred to development in terms of personal anecdotes, respondents from group N (national) employed the language of economics and quantifiable indicators of development, and individuals from group G (global) voiced ideological aspirations of development as improving the quality of life.

However, upon reflexivity and through a second layer of analysis, a common thread in the interviewees’ subjective definitions of development was identified. Indeed, every account of development was somehow presented as the premise to something larger and more important: Freedom.

Recalling Amartya Sen’s account of Development as Freedom (1999) mentioned in the literature review, the analysis was then drawn from the instrumental perspective designed by Sodhi in ‘Development as Freedom: An India Perspective’. This book is a collection of papers, presentations, and deliberations from a seminar dedicated to research on that topic. Three of the five perspectives presented in the book (Sodhi, 2004:9), and deriving from Sen’s theory (1999) will be used to present the findings:

- Political Freedoms
- Economic Facilities
- Social Opportunities

Although aware of the limitations of using an instrumental perspective to present research findings, the three analytical tools listed above allow for a frame within which findings can be grounded, explored, analysed, and incorporated back to answer the research question. The choice of focusing on three, rather than five perspectives is relative to the scope of the research, and the need of focus in order to allow for deeper
analysis. The two other perspectives presented in the book and excluded from the analysis are ‘Transparency Guarantees’ and ‘Protective Security’.

The analysis unfolding below follows the logic arising from the conceptual framework, and is built around the ‘missing links’ in Heeks’ ICT4D value chain (c.f annex 9) emerging from the literature review:

- From adoption to use – The First Disconnect
- From output to outcomes – The Second Disconnect
- From outcomes to development impact – The Third Disconnect

The purpose of this analysis is to identify ‘connectors’ for the development factor to travel through the value chain.

Before proceeding to the analysis of the findings, it should be noted that the ‘levels of engagement’ have been conceived as analytical tools for the purpose of this study. When asked at which level they were engaging with, most respondents showed commitment to different levels. The groups formed here (L;N;G) are meant to convey the focus of their engagement. Moreover, the existence of more than three levels needs to be acknowledged, especially given the stratified governance structure of the Indian context.

From Adoption to Use

Political Freedoms

According to Sodhi, Political Freedoms refer to ‘the opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles’ (2004:IX). Access here, is conceived as a technology of information and communication, as recalling from the literature review. Research findings point to the internet as a medium for accessing information about political entitlements, it is thus conceived as a form of political freedom.

Political freedoms, according to Sodhi (2004:39) ‘make governments accountable and responsive to ordinary citizens’. The term freedom here, echoes Sen’s conception of ‘effective opportunity’ (Sodhi, 2004:30): the ability, or power ‘to do or be’ embodied in
people. As emphasized by one of the interviewees, it is people’s ability to use information which constitutes an effective opportunity for political freedom:

U.C: “Then of course, there is access to information, when they start finding out about government services and entitlements on their own, and start seeing the results. It’s not about just accessing, but ensuring that the way they are using the internet brings them those information and those services from the government.”

Operating at the grassroots, local level, U.C sees her work amongst DEF as ensuring that people get access to their political entitlements, through an effective use of the internet. The process of building up ‘effective opportunity’ therefore appears to be mediated by actors like U.C, through digital literacy trainings which will in term enable new internet users to ‘avail the services on their own’ (quote U.C).

Another interviewee gave the example of the National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN), initiated in 2011 in India, funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund, and aimed at bringing broadband connectivity to the Gram Panchayat (local self-governance):

S.R: “The biggest challenge is that they don’t even know that something like this exists for them. So the first objective is to make them aware that this exists for them, and that is it supposed to happen, because it is basically people’s money that has gone into this project. So if they start raising voices collectively towards the local governance, eventually the voices can go up to the top, that: ok, where is my optical fibre?”

This notion of making people’s voices reach to the top, or ‘reach the areas that matter’ (quote S.R), as argued by interviewees operating at the local level, needs to be thought of in terms of reciprocity: reaching people so they can reach back. Internet access here is conceived as a medium enabling individuals to fulfil their political freedoms both by accessing information, and by claiming their political entitlements. In this sense, it is akin to an accountability mechanism between the government and, to borrow Sen’s words ‘ordinary citizens’.
Connectivity over what?

“Does freedom mean anything to those without shelter clothing, or food?” (Sodhi, 2004:45)

According to Sodhi, there is a need to problematize the idea of political freedom, as illustrated through the following example of ‘the starving man’:

“Give him a straightforward choice: a meal on the one hand, and the liberty to be critical of the system that keeps him hungry on the other. What would he choose? The answer is obvious.” (Sodhi, 2004:46)

The notion of political freedom elaborated above needs to be contrasted with a debate over the prioritization of internet access as a development goal. According to one of the interviewees:

S.K: “It will be important to connect unconnected populations, but that needs to be done in a sensitive way, and in a way that is conscious of the unique needs of populations like that. And doesn’t prioritize connection over for example education, or providing basic needs (...) So I don’t think it’s either or, but it needs to be done in parallel.”

This holistic account of internet access by group G respondents suggests that there is no trade-off between basic needs and the political freedom associated with internet access. Both ‘feed into each other’ towards the achievement of development. However, this perspective has to be contrasted with the practical challenges emerging at the grassroots level from an attempt to make digital literacy happen. Here, insights from respondents engaged at the local level point towards the challenge of mobilization.

U.C: “Most of these people are daily wage workers, so if they are giving two hours out of their day to learn digital literacy, or three hours let’s include half an hour for their travel and everything. If they’re giving you three hours a day, they are losing that to any hours of pay probably. So how do you convince them that in the long run this is gonna be more beneficial to you, even if you lose out on you pay today? That is a big challenge”
Another respondent from group L framed this trade-off in terms of ‘building a consensus’:

R.K: “After we did decide, ok this is where we’re gonna work, where we’re gonna set up our centre, we identify a person from the village who would eventually end up being our trainer and our coordinator (...) and they will come in and build consensus. Because it is not just about having, you know this small team of two people from Delhi who are saying, oh, the internet is so lovely, listen to me, hear my knowledge (...) it’s about bringing in other people”

This consensus, as suggested by R.K can be reached through working on the ground, and showing people the capability and ‘potential of what they now can access’ (quote R.K).

The First Connector

Here, different perspectives from actors engaged at different levels gives substance to the normative notion of ‘political freedom’. Through this demonstration I have sought to trace back the link between development and internet access through the lens of access as political freedom. Accountability has been identified as the core mechanism through which citizens can reciprocally access and claim their political entitlements.

A debate emerges from discussions with individuals engaged at different levels, and raises the question of prioritizing access over other development needs, on the basis that it enables the realization of political freedom. Although this question may seem to qualify as a thought experiment (i.e the example of the starving man), it has real material implications on people’s livelihoods (i.e economic implications). This trade-off seems to require a contextually informed perspective on people’s lives and daily priorities, as well as knowledge of the legislation, and government spendings.

Highlighting this aspect of the access debate through connecting different perspectives should warn us against the danger of mistaking normative ‘development as freedom’ aspirations, for interventionist guidelines. Moreover, it suggests a reconciliation of the work and practical challenges faced by ‘everyday actors’ at the local level, with theoretical and holistic accounts of actors at the global level. The role of the everyday
actor here, is conceived as ‘building consensus’ through a mediation exercise from access to use, and will be referred to as the ‘First Connector’.

From Outputs to Outcomes

Economic Facilities

Economic Facilities refer to: ‘the opportunities that individuals enjoy respectively for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange’ (Sodhi, 2004:X). This section refers to internet access as a technology of production, as developed in the literature review, and most apparent in discussions with respondents from group N.

V.I: “For me development is typically related to economic development wherein a person (...) below poverty line has adequate opportunities using ICTs to access livelihood options, or livelihood opportunities. Like for micro-entrepreneurs to be able to use ICTs, she’s able to use mobile phones, she’s able to sell more goods and provide more services (...) I would approach this entire idea of development purely from the economic perspective. I would say that over a period of time this will bring in other required development related outcomes, especially looking at empowerment, especially looking at freedom”

Interviewee V.I makes it clear that access as an economic entitlement enables the achievement of development, ‘over a period of time’ (quote V.I). Being connected is thus a requirement in order to foster development through economic growth, as this quote from R.J (group N) illustrates:

R.J: “To me today, every citizen has to be on the internet to be part of the knowledge and service economy (...) There are two bottlenecks: access to device, and connectivity”

According to R.J, internet access, taken together with access to device, is a necessary economic entitlement. Access as an economic facility is therefore considered as a ‘bottleneck’: a crucial point through which development can in terms be achieved. This emphasis on access to both the device, and connectivity is worth highlighting. Indeed,
it brings into perspective criteria through which connectivity is traditionally assessed: as purely access to infrastructure such as government schemes (e.g. NOFN), or solely access to ICTs such as statistics on mobile phone consumption (e.g. ITU, ICT Fact and Figures 2016).

Respondent V.I, who works as a researcher, also points to this distinction, he phrases in terms of the ‘supply side’: internet governance, and the ‘demand side’: ICTs use. For instance, part of his research looks at the use of ICTs by urban micro-entrepreneurs, investigating how women use ICTs for the growth of their business, contrasting personal use with business use.

V.I: “That kind of euphoria attached to micro-entrepreneurs using ICTs is not really there from a developing country context.”

The internet, by enabling the ‘production and consumption’ of goods and services, is seen as a medium for economic growth. Researchers from group N partly conceive their role as advising the government on technical issues such as: ‘design of the backbone’, ‘spectrum management’, or ‘how to engage with public/private partnerships’ (quote R.J). Their research and advocacy work seeks to assess how economic entitlements associated with ICTs, reach, or in some cases fail to reach people.

**Development v.s ‘the Invisible Hand’?**

This idea of internet access as an economic entitlement was also challenged by interviewees who questioned the role of the state and the private sector in providing internet access. Actors involved at the national level pointed to two main challenges, the ‘affordability gap’, and the ‘feasibility problem’:

V.I: “People do not have adequate money to buy the devices (...) the price of a smartphone is nearly 4000 Rupees, it’s close to maybe $80 (...) close to 40% of people are living below $2 per day. (...) Feasibility problem in the sense that if I have a village with 50 people, the telecoms service provider is not interested in coming here”
According to the interviewees, it is the role of the government, and private companies, to moderate these two challenges. For instance, it was mentioned that the Indian government recently passed a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) law to encourage companies to invest in rural places. The role of private companies has been identified as a recurrent theme in all interviews. Interviewee S.K stresses the complex role of the private sector as specific to the area of internet connectivity:

S.K: “In the current context, the private sector owns a lot of infrastructure and provides lot of services that are connected to the internet (...) it naturally has an important role to play (...) It’s especially complicated in this sector because, like I said, the private sector provides so many services and so much of the infrastructure, so you can’t really detach them”

When asked whether they saw a tension between profit-making incentives of the private sector, and development goals with regards to providing internet access, respondents had different views. The ‘group’/level of engagement of interviewees here did not seem to be relevant, rather, diverging views were identified as belief, or absence of belief, in the capitalist system. Here, a clash of economic ideologies can be observed and traced back to a belief in what Adam Smith coined the ‘invisible hand of the market’ (1776). In other words, can the market channel self-interest (i.e profit making) towards socially desirable ends (i.e socio-economic development)?

A.G: “I mean I guess to believe that you have to be a firm believer in the capitalist system. That the capitalist system is something that will always think of the best for society. And I don’t, so... and I’m very weary of private entities to be honest”

V.I: “If you are a very radical leftist or a Marxist, you have problems with the capitalistic way of thinking, there is a possibility. But I do not really belong to this category. I get a feeling you cannot be sceptical or suspicious of private enterprises all the time”

These diverging views were then connected through a common suggestion that the role of the state is to regulate and ensure that private companies do not abuse their profit making incentives.
S.K: “I’m not sure if I see a natural tension, there can be (...) but they are not mutually exclusive, there are ways to ensure, and it generally happens through regulation, that the market doesn’t abuse its own profit making incentive”

A.G: “The duty bearers should be the state”

An example of government regulation can be found in the recent TRAI decision to ban zero-rating (c.f timeline; TRAI paper, 2016).

The Second Connector

The argument about internet access as an economic entitlement, and by extension a priority for the realization of development, brings into question the role of the state and the private sector. Attention to the work of individuals engaged at the national level, reveals the necessity to balance economic optimism whilst acknowledging technical challenges such as ‘affordability’ and ‘feasibility’. This will be referred to as the ‘Second Connector’.

Contrasting perspectives from actors engaged at different levels sheds light on the clash of economic ideologies underlying the debate. Diverging ideologies are important to pin-point here, as they will, directly or indirectly, influence the way power relations are apprehended in negotiations. For instance, how actors will engage in multi-stakeholder forums with a belief, or not, that the private sector can compromise.

From Outcomes to Development Impacts

Social opportunities

Social Opportunities refer to: ‘the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so on, which influence individuals’ substantive freedom to live better’ (Sodhi, 2004:X). Here, internet access is equated to a technology of opportunities, a ‘socio-centric’ construction (2004:50). Findings will be discussed around the themes of education, gender norms, and marginalization.
As highlighted by one of the respondents through an anecdote, internet access presents an opportunity for the realization of educational purposes, as well as personal development:

U.C: “So we’ve taught children how to use the internet, but they’ve taught themselves how to use Google Images to travel around the world. So I was in one of the centres in Rajasthan, and this little kid, 12-year-old kid pulls me and says ‘Hey, can I show you what the Taj Mahal looks like?’ (...) It’s not something we’ve taught them, exactly, to use this tool for this purpose, but they’re discovering how to use things on their own”

Moreover, internet access, as exemplified through another anecdote, has the potential to challenge societal norms, particularly gender norms. For instance, by inviting small acts of resistance:

U.C: “There is a group of women in Bihar (...) every afternoon when their husbands and fathers in law go out to work, they jump the wall, their boundary wall from the backyard, and come to our centre to learn computer literacy. Now they’ve finished their training, but they’ve continued to do that for over a year, every afternoon they jump the wall, they come (laughs)”

Internet access also challenges marginalization by providing what U.C calls ‘a sense of confidence’ to people, challenging perceptions of class structure, and urban/rural divide:

U.C: “Firstly I think, there is a sense of confidence. These are people who’ve ne... most of them have not been to school, or have not completed they’re education up to high school. And they always feel marginalized because they don’t have knowledge. So computer… access to computer which they always have perceived as something of the urban class, or urban educated class, it becomes accessible to them. So the confidence is there because it starts bridging the divide between the urban and rural”

Connectivity here, mediates access to social opportunities which would otherwise be inhibited by the structure of society, or by self-inhibition of marginalized individuals.
Challenging/furthering inequalities?

The education/gender/marginalization themes were also apparent in conversations as challenges to the expansion of internet access in India. The same factors can indeed create both opportunities and challenges. This calls for a critical engagement with the context in which these factors evolve. The contextual element was highly stressed by all interviewees.

Along with these (education, gender, marginalization), a number of challenges also emerged in conversations with local actors, they are listed below. The scope of this project does not allow for proper engagement with these challenges, however, they should be read as suggestions for further research.

*Culture*

R.K: “Cultural factors is a huge deal in India (...) You’ve got these cases where these elected representatives of the people (in the Panchayat) are banning access to technology (...) Where they say that it’s immoral”

*Age*

R.K: “Mark Prensky, in 2001 wrote an article called ‘Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives’, it’s something very similar to that, where you’ve got individuals who have grown up, you know, what are known are 90 kids and millennials, who have grown up in the age of technology (...) but then you’ve got individuals who didn’t grow up in that time, and who have to learn all these things, and they are known as digital immigrants”

*Geography*

R.K: “Very important in some of the more hilly states, and of course are North Eastern states, because they are very mountainous. So, again, getting to a place is a very time-consuming affair. And building net-mobile networks in these areas is actually more expensive. Simply because you have to contend with geography.”
**Linguistics**

R.K: “Even though, one of our main languages: Hindi, is default one of the most spoken languages in the world, it doesn’t even figure in the top 20 languages that content of the internet is on”

**Institutional pushback**

Giving the example of the Right to Information Act (RTI) 2005:

R.K: “Very recently a lot of very senior bureaucrats and government officials have been on record, saying that the RTI is a complete waste of our time. And the RTI is not meant for them, the RTI is meant for the citizens (…) Local bureaucrats and local politicians are so untrusting of what the internet can do"

Challenges regarding gender were also emphasized by group G interviewees, pointing to the possibility of a cultural backlash after access:

A.G: “A lot of the times it’s men who have that access *(to mobile internet)* and there are these cultural assumptions that you know if a woman has a phone or something, there is something like suspicious going on… She’s being led astray, she has you know like a lover or something"

Thereby remains the question of how much these challenges can be foreseen before access, and moderated after access. When asked about the future of internet governance with regards to expanding connectivity, respondents from group G pointed to challenges in terms of ‘geopolitical rivalries and cybersecurity’ (A.G). As well as challenges in the governance structure of the internet:

S.K: “The future is very uncertain in that sense, but the fundamental narrative from what I believe anyway, should be one where the public interest is served. That’s why civil society has such an important role to play, that’s why governance processes have to be inclusive, and transparent, and open”

All of these challenges, I argue here, need to be taken together.
The Third Connector

Findings point towards social opportunities as both mediated and challenged by internet access. On the one hand, access enables the social structure to be challenged for the betterment of society. On the other hand, access itself is challenged by the social structure. This duality of access, as an enabler and a barrier to development, calls for further considerations of access as a ‘magnifier’ of both social inequalities, and social opportunities. As phrased by one of the interviewees:

R.K: “It is a parallel space to the offline world as it mirrors a lot of the inequalities, and a lot of the prejudices that we hold in the offline space. What it does (the internet) is that it magnifies them”

This aspect of the debate is crucial in the way it mitigates the socio-centric narrative of access as an enabler for all other social entitlements. The aim of the ‘magnifier argument’ is to acknowledge the responsibility which comes with prioritizing internet access. The role of everyday actors here, is conceived as mitigating challenges: the ‘Third Connector’.

It is all the more crucial to connect perspectives, for an engagement at different levels brings in unique challenges.

Grounding the Global in the Everyday, in conversation

One of the interviewees eloquently summarized the importance of connecting perspectives from different levels, as well as different disciplines:

R.K: “It’s not just about bridging the gap between research and practice, it’s also about having a varied set of conversations (...) that’s where it’s important for us to build a conversation, because when we sit down (...) we open the table up for these cross-cutting discussions across so many disciplines. Me I bring psychology to the table at times, I bring policy analysis (...) we’ve got my colleague who brings economics and national defense (...) we have a PhD in development communications (...) we’ve got a social worker (...). So yes, multi-disciplinarity is very very very very important (...)”
because of the vastness of the internet and the various disciplines that do intersect with it, and that it has an influence on”

This highlights the fact that the multi-disciplinarity needed to nurture a progressive conversation, is embedded in people, and reflected in the structure of the organization itself.

Before concluding this chapter, let us refer back to the research questions as laid out in the conceptual framework:

(1) What is the missing thread in the ICT4D value chain?
   
   A series of ‘endogenous connectors’ mediated by everyday actors: Building consensus; Balancing economic optimism; Mitigating challenges

(2) Do individuals engaged at different levels have different assumptions about the role of internet access in development? Yes, from normativity and aspirations at the global level, technical expertise at the national level, to practical challenges and experiences at the local level

(3) What are the connections and disconnections observed? Points of contention, or opportunities for enhanced dialogue between these three analytical levels of engagement? What matters is to combine these different perspectives, not contrast them

(4) As internet access is expanding to developing countries, where do we look for progressive change in internet governance? In everyday actors, through a multi-disciplinary, multi-level conversation

Answering these questions altogether informs the research question around which this paper revolves:

How do everyday actors engaging with issues of internet access and development from different perspectives (global, national, local) conceive the role of internet access in the socio-economic development of India?
They conceive it in ways that are both normative and context-driven. Perspectives from different levels need to be reconnected through a multi-disciplinary; multi-level conversation in order to foster a debate on connectivity and development which is grounded in the everyday. The role of these actors is crucial, it is through their work as mediators that the ‘endogenous’ factors enabling internet access to translate into development can be carried out. Moreover, it is in these roles that the agency of everyday actors can be identified.

The answer formulated here is the theory emerging from this research, it can be summarized in the phrase: ‘grounding the global in the everyday’, borrowed from Davies (2006).

Figure 3- Endogenous Factors in the ICT4D value chain

Legend, from top to bottom:
Line 1: Sodhi (2004), Development as Freedom constituents
Line 3: Heeks (2007), Value chain
Conclusion

“Questioning builds a way” (Heidegger, 1977:3)

In the ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, the philosopher Martin Heidegger declares that ‘we are questioning concerning technology in order to bring light to our relationship to its essence’ (1977:23). In doing so, Heidegger warns us against the temptation to blindly push for technology, or to helplessly rebel against it (Dreyfus & Spinoza, 2003:339). It is in balancing these two extremes that Heidegger conceives a ‘free relation to technology’ (Dreyfus & Spinoza, 2003: 340). This dissertation does not claim to be engaging in the metaphysics of the human relationship to technology, but rather points to it as another dimension for further considerations. Indeed, through an engagement with questions of socio-economic development, this paper hints towards further investigation on the notion of progress, technology, and development, around which the expansion of connectivity revolves.

Theoretical achievements need to be thought of in reference to the axes informing the conceptual framework of this research. With regards to the field of ICT4D, this paper consolidates the critique exploring the link between ‘ICT and D’ developed in Heeks (2007; 2010). It pushes the argument further by revealing ‘endogenous connectors’ on the ICT4D value chain, embedded in people.

In the field of Internet Governance, this paper questions the ability of its global and highly institutionalized framework to carry out the development discourse advocated by the default actor of social change in multi-stakeholder processes: civil society. It does so by arguing that regulatory systems should not be the only focus of internet governance. Instead, we should be looking at ‘who acts’, and how the perspectives of ‘Everyday Actors’ can inform a global conversation around the topic of connectivity that is grounded in the everyday, and conscious of development needs and challenges: from global and national policy engagement, to everyday practices.

This broad multi-disciplinary puzzle should be read as a modest attempt to begin a conversation around the topic of connectivity, looking beyond the field of media and communication. The decision to advocate for media and communications research that
pushes the boundaries of the field at the intersection of development, governance and international relations is also a limiting factor to the achievements of this paper.

Indeed, in-depth media-focused analysis has not been realized here. However, as highlighted in the introduction, the field of media and communication has a role to play in framing the debate around connectivity. Be it through representation (or lack thereof), discourse and naming, or political economy considerations. The field possesses the necessary tools to deconstruct how connectivity is framed by internet governance ‘stakeholders’ seeking to shape or control its expansion. As such, the topic calls for media and communications scholars to conduct further research involving reflexions on the material implications of the field’s own discursive practices.

The choice of phenomenological interviewing sought to, quite literally, ‘draw out the influences and voices’ (Lynch, 2008:74) of everyday actors who might not always reach the policy level, but indirectly affect and are affected by it. Methodological implications for further research on the topic of connectivity should make ‘voice’ a central concern.

By way of conclusion, I would like to shed light on the fundamentally missing element of this research: environmental sustainability. As mentioned in the analysis, connectivity cannot be detached from access to devices. Expanding internet access therefore means producing more devices, using more resources to do so, and managing e-waste. Such considerations come to strengthen the main argument in this paper: that making connectivity a priority should not be detached from its implications.
Bibliography:

(This bibliography is not a ‘reference list’, it includes the main resources used to produce the assignment, including the ones not quoted or paraphrased in the body of the dissertation – it is presented according to the APA 6th Edition referencing style)


Global Partners and Associates (2013). *Internet Governance: Mapping the Battleground*


Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Prohibition of Discriminatory Tariffs for Data Services Regulations (2016)


UN General Assembly (2015). *Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society*


## Appendices

### 1- Identity of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants initials</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Position/Role</th>
<th>Group for the purpose of analysis</th>
<th>Type/date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.J</td>
<td>IIMA</td>
<td>Research Teaching Consultancy</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Skype, 18/07/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.C</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>Senior Officer in the Media and Communications Department</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Skype, 22/07/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.K</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>Senior Officer for Research</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Skype, 25/07/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.R</td>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>eNGO project</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Skype, 25/07/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.I</td>
<td>IITD</td>
<td>Research Assistant Professor</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Skype, 26/07/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.K</td>
<td>GPD</td>
<td>Programme Lead, Global Internet Freedom</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Face-to-face, London, 27/07/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.G</td>
<td>GPD</td>
<td>Project Manager, GPD’s Freedom Online Coalition Project</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Face-to-face, London, 27/07/16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2- Organizations Descriptions

**Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)** – Not-for-profit organization (India)
Vision: “Our vision it to end economic poverty and social backwardness through the simple expedient of ending information poverty by empowering marginalised and information-dark communities with digital literacy, access to digital tools, and information-rich knowledge societies ushered in by the Internet and the digital revolution.”
Website: http://defindia.org/

**Global Partners Digital (GPD)** – Social Purpose Company (UK)
Vision: “Working with civil society groups, governments, international institutions and businesses to protect and promote human rights values online”
Website: http://www.gp-digital.org/

**Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA)** – Public, autonomous institute (India)
Vision: “Educating Leaders of Enterprises”
Website: http://www.iimahd.ernet.in/

**Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)** – Public Research University (India)
Vision: “To contribute to India and the World through excellence in scientific and technical education and research; to serve as a valuable resource for industry and society; and remain a source of pride for all Indians.”
Website: http://www.iitd.ac.in/
3- Identity of Pilot Respondents

Former RQ: What is the role of civil society in shaping the future of internet governance?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants initials</th>
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<th>Position/Role</th>
<th>Group for the purpose of analysis</th>
<th>Type/date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.S</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
<td>WSIS + 10 review process</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Face-to-face, London, 23/03/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.J.S</td>
<td>ITforChange</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Skype, 26/04/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.P</td>
<td>Save The Internet Campaign</td>
<td>Founder</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Skype, 26/04/16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4- Interview Consent Form

I hereby agree to participate in this research project on the link between internet access and development in India.

I understand that:
- I am willingly choosing to participate in this research.
- I can stop my interview with *(the interviewer)* at any point and that this decision will in no way affect me negatively.
- I will not be paid for participating in this research project. I can remain anonymous, if I choose to (see below).
- I can contact *(the interviewer)* at the details given in the Participant Information Sheet if I have any concerns or questions.

I, ________________________________________________ _________________,

hereby want / do not want (please circle one) my real identity used in any reports written using this interview’s information.”

_____________________________ _____________________ _________________
Participant Signature Date
5- Topic Guide

Introductions

- Introducing myself and the research
- Ethics consent procedure: verbal/written
- Tell me about:
  o Yourself
  o your organization
  o the work you do on a daily basis

Engagement with issues of connectivity, clarifications about development

1- At which level do you engage with issues of internet governance?
   - Global, Regional, national, grassroots level?
   - How?

2- My research is about the link between connectivity and development. What does the term ‘development’ mean to you?
   - Definition/ critique/ experience?

3- In your opinion, what does providing internet access to marginalized communities help to achieve?
   - What do you consider as ‘marginalized communities’?

Opinions about the role and potential of connectivity in development

4- Do you think bringing connectivity to unconnected parts of India, is/should be a development priority?
   - Why? / Why not?

5- Do you think providing internet access can be both market-driven, and a development goal?
   - Do you see any tensions?

6- What do you think of the statement that ‘connectivity is a human right’?
   - As stated by different stakeholders for different purposes
   - A vision in your organization?
Achieving progressive social change

7- How do you see your role in ensuring that what comes after access is beneficial to the community?
- Personal experience
- What do you think is needed?

8- What are the main challenges emerging from expanding internet access in India?
- Opportunities?
- Costs and benefits?

9- Finally, how do you imagine the future of internet governance?
- Broad, personal
- In terms of governance? Technological progress?

Conclusion

10- Do you have any questions for me?
- Anything I haven’t asked that you think should be discussed?
- Anything you would like to stress or highlight from our conversation?
- Thank you
Global Partners Digital, London, 2707/16

6- Interview transcript

I: interviewer

A: interviewee

Age and gender of the respondent are not relevant here

Expressions have not been transcribed details, for they are not relevant to the research

The transcript is faithful to: verbal expressions (e.g ‘you know’), unfinished sentences trailing off, false sentence start, non-lexical utterance or ‘fillers’ (Hm), emotion (laugh)

[the following recorded conversation begins after verbal consent has been given]

I: So, as I said earlier my research is about connectivity and development, and first of all I’m going to ask you to introduce yourself, and the work that you do in your organization

A: Ok, my name is A.G., I work at GPD as a project manager, I currently work on the cyber capacity building project, and we’re working on a training program for human rights defenders looking at cyber policy and human rights. It’s a huge thing, and it’s gonna be open to everyone, so you can… and it’s gonna launch this week, which is very good for you

I: Ok, yes…

A: … and there will be a video and access, and there will be a webinar, like a Q&A session. Um, and as well as that I actually work with, I help run the secretariat of a coalition of governments called the Freedom Online Coalition, where GP works, so acts as a secretariat for them. So yeah, that’s my work

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3 As explained in Jackson (Online)
I: Ok, thank you. And so, at which level of internet governance would you say you’re engaging?

A: Which level? Oh it’s kind of...

I: Yes, global, regional, grassroots...

A: We try and work across all three levels

I: Hm...

A: We have kind of, different, different project models. I think S.’s project (colleague also interviewed) is more about sub-granting, and enabling others to do work at the national level. And then, sort of, arrows to sort of bring everything together at the regional and global levels, so you know project I recently did was on, hm, increasing human rights voices or civil society voices in the WSIS process

I: Yeah...

A: The review process

I: Hm, hm

A: and that where we work with partners in Brazil, India and Kenya. And they did a lot of engagement, awareness raising work on the ground in their sort of national, their local counties, and then they took those documents and put them in the review. And then we provided guidance at the sort of regional, and global levels to create a sort of global meeting where those views were sort of distilled into something that had more concrete tasks

I: Hm

A: And were direct text edits. So basically providing that strategic level at the global level. So you can see we work at like, all the three.

I: Hm, and so you provide support, and kind of coordinate all three levels

A: Hm, Hm, yeah

I: Ok, hm, interesting, and so my research is particularly focused on connectivity and development, what do you understand by the term development? What does it mean to you... socio-economic or more, growth...
A: Ok, wow, that’s a big question…

I: That’s very personal, I mean if you… some people I interviewed gave my examples of you know, their experience of development

A: Hm, hm. Ok, I mean, when it comes to development, it’s… it can mean all sorts of things right… I mean, it really depends on the context that you put it in. I mean if you talk about development and connectivity, it kind of becomes different in terms of like the actors that are involved, because it’s very telecoms based…

I: Yeah…

A: … there are so many private companies involved, and so much less regulation, then say if you were doing like a water sanitation project. Because there are certain, hm, duties that already beheld to the state and there’s less private sector involvement. And if there is private sector involvement it’s more scrutinized, because there is this sort of like duty of care almost. That the state has to provide things that are a public good

I: Yeah

A: I feel like development is very much for trying to combat inequalities and poverty, and provide things that are a public good like water, or food, or all those kind of things.

I: Ok. And so in your opinion, what does providing access to marginalized communities… hm my case study is about India, but if you wanna talk more generally that’s perfectly fine… hm, what can it bring to marginalized communities?

A: Ok, I think, again it’s about how you think about access. So there is a big debate now about whether access is a right or not…

I: Hm, hm, yeah…

A: And hm, there are sort of two sides to it, because you know, on one side some people say that access is something that shouldn’t be a right, but it’s… because it might sort of dilute the rights system as it is, or fragment it and allow it to be sort of molded to… for less noble purposes basically

I: Hm… yeah

A: But then there is the other side where access is really seen as a crucial enabler for the realization of kind of all the rights. And I think access is really interesting, because
it’s kind of the most pointed example of the division between sort of rights communities, in terms of political and civil rights which are like freedom of expression, right to information, freedom of assembly, association… All of those, hm which are really seen as the underpinning right of the democratic system. And again that is a very Western concept. And it’s something that has really evolved through Western treaties and things…

I: Yeah…

A: Which now are global, but the history is Western. So with access what’s happening now is that, especially in developing countries they are seeing access as a real solid example of the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. So it’s an area of rights discourse and development that is still, growing, and still being born basically. That’s why I think it’s so interesting because with access, it seems like if you connect it to the political and civil rights, you can argue that you don’t need the internet to express yourself. You can express yourself in different ways, it’s not essential…

I: Hm…

A: But then, it’s like if you have… you only feel it if you already had it, and it’s taken away, then it’s a right. Because that means there is inequality in the society, there is a service you had, a right you had which has been taken away. But if you never had it in the first place, and you know in India there is a lot of people who don’t even know what the internet is, you know, like there is a strong argument to say that you know it’s not essential…

I: Hm…

A: You know they are living, they’re alright. But what that means is that now there are rising levels of inequality…

I: Hm…

A: And in India especially, I think what’s happening is that people are seeing that you know, it’s a booming market. But there is a sort of division between economic social and cultural, and political and civil, is really opening the door for private companies to come in

I: Yes…
A: Because the economic and social ones should be… the duty bearers should be the state, but the duty bearers now are becoming private companies. Who may not see the internet as a public good. So then it raises very difficult questions about what access is.

I: Yes, that’s exactly what I’m trying to research. Ok, that’s very interesting, thank you. Because it’s very difficult to connect all the different debates, and I think the way that you put it is very… it makes sense, it makes more sense. Because all the debates are happening you know, in an isolated way. And you know, in a way to build a really good conversation you need to connect all of these issues of human rights and public/private…

A: Yeah…

I: And so, do you think that bringing connectivity to unconnected parts of India, for example, is a development priority? Or should be a development priority?

A: Well, yeah, I think it should be a development priority because at the end of the day there are covenants that imply it, you know, to be part of an adequate standard of living

I: Hm…

A: Again that the economic, social, cultural rights. And even in terms of the WSIS process, it was you know, publicly, globally acknowledged that this is a goal, this is a development goal. Because we’re moving towards being and Information Society. So if you don’t make it a development priority now, and you keep up with this argument that you know, it’ not essential, these people are fine, inequality will rise. And it’s not just inequality between the North and the South, but inequality between rural and urban, between genders… And you see the way that you know, especially women in India, have access to the internet, because a lot of the times it’s men who have that access and there are these cultural assumptions that you know if a woman has a phone or something, there is something like suspicious going on… She’s being led a stray, she has you know like a lover or something. Which is ridiculous, and you know it’s… internet access is, can basically if it’s not done right, if it’s not done equally it can become a tool for oppression, it can become a tool for keeping people under control because as you see like internet shut downs now….

I: Hm…
A: You know they’re increasingly being used like oh there might be a protest, let’s just cut it, and that is a tool of control. You know access is very much becoming intertwined with security... Hm, and actually it has been for a while, I was reading the other day that the… there is the Sherman Act, that was… the Sherman Act in the US, I think it came in at like the 1900, like 1800 or something...

I: Yeah...

A: … and previously there is The Bell, you know which is AT&T now, the big telecoms company...

I: Yeah...

A: And at the time they were a massive monopoly, and I think it was 19... like during WWII, they were a massive monopoly, and the Sherman Act was used in terms of competition law to break up those monopolies...

I: Alright, ok...

A: Hm, but in WWII it was decided that they wouldn’t break that up, on the basis of national security, that they needed that public service...

I: Ah...

A: In order to win the war...

I: Ok, wow...

A: But then in the 1980s, it was then… it’s a very famous example of monopolies being broken up… which then allowed for sort of better services to be put in and more competition and you know innovation, and that way it wasn’t… it wasn’t something that was under so much control by one entity.

I: Ok....

A: So again, I think it brings in question of who is controlling, right, and what are the interests involved because with the state it could be merely the political parties staying in power...

I: Yeah...

A: Or, for a company it can be keeping their customers, which I think is a...
I: or making new ones

A: Or making new ones. I think it’s funny when you look at access now. Like when you look at Facebook or Free Basics, a lot of people argue right that they were basically just maintaining the customers they had, they were keeping their customers. But they were sort of going on this sort of banner of like ‘We’re gonna connect the next billion’, which they weren’t… Which they weren’t right, and hm, the thing is when you have proper access it means that like everybody will be moving towards this international Information Society, where everyone is connected, and maybe things like nation states and borders and identities don’t matter as much. I mean, that’s one of the arguments, but when you have such inequalities, class will always be a factor. That’s where you see… like I really see this with the Brexit over here you know, like a lot of people were saying like ‘of course the EU’, you know like ‘we’re connected’, you know ‘we’re one’…

I: That’s a very good example because you know because here you can really see the class factor. That inequalities are invisible in a way, and we forget about class structures…

A: Yeah

I: But it exists, and it’s everywhere, in different countries

A: It’s everywhere, absolutely. And in India there’s castes, there’s religion as well, there’s so many divisions. It’s such a tensed country to be honest. Hm, the way that it was created was very bloody, and there’s so many regional tensions, and Asia in general is really like sort of fraught with regional tensions which affect a lot of their cyber policy to be honest. Because it means that a lot of their, hm what’s the word… priorities… focus on security rather than development

I: Yeah

A: Or they look at development as a means for security.

I: Hm…

A: And again that sort of feeds into… so this global discourse of securitized development. So, you know…

I: What do you mean by securitized development?
A: It’s really interesting if you haven’t heard of it… So basically it’s when, when issues are securitized, basically what it means is that they’re immediately made as this sort of like urgent issue, which increases the power of the executive. So it means that they can give these sort of security directives without consultation, and it generally brings in a suspension of due process or like proper scrutiny. I think with development, what it does is that it brings in an element of like, like opacity basically

I: Hm…

A: There’s a bit of a black box as to why they have these conditions. And you can see it in the UK’s strategy, in DFID’s strategy. Like a lot of the time a condition will be a development project needs to feed into the security interest of the donor country

I: Hm…

A: And that’s a problem! Because it means that the end goal is not the betterment of that country, it’s the security of the donor country, right…

I: Hm…

A: So it means that you know, when you look at other sort of development project. There is one… I can’t sort of… yeah… I can’t remember the name of the author, but it was about a health project in the Congo…

I: Hm…

A: In DRC, which under those conditions turned into something that was far more about monitoring, and sort of preventing things from getting worse. Treating symptoms rather than dealing with the root cause of whatever that problem was. And the thing is when you have that objective, a lot of the time that will be what the donor country is interested in. And from time to time these security interests dovetail. So a really famous development example of securitized development is in Sri Lanka, where the security interest and the development interest kind of dovetailed where there were lots of development projects going on in Sri Lanka. And they were aimed at you know, building up the infrastructure of the country, and governance projects as well. So to build up the governance structures, but then with the Tamil Tigers there, it became tied up with the global discourse of the global war on terror

I: Ok…
A: So those development projects became sort of enablers to win hearts and minds and that kind of thing, but while that was happening at the same time, the discourse allowed for the government to basically carry out ethnic cleansing on the Tamil Tigers. In with the view that they were making the country more stable, and more developed.

I: Hm…

A: So it’s about how all these different, I guess discourses come together, but… I mean, I’m not sure how much that has to do with connectivity…

N: No, you can link it. Because the security, it’s all about international relations and relations between countries. You can… it’s a different power relation that’s also happening and you also need to take it into account

A: Absolutely

I: Most of the time, as I said earlier, it’s isolated from many other conversations. But this is… this is really politics, and it has to be connected with the whole debate

A: Yeah, I’m not sure if he’s still there, but an interesting person to interview just about securitized development, if you’re interested in that is my old professor at X (name of institution), D.R., he did the whole project on Sri Lanka. That’s is life big purpose (laughs)…

I: (laughs)

A: But yeah, he sorts of connects securitized development with taking a step back. Going even further with the world view of maintaining liberal order. So looking at the end of the Cold War, and where democracy was seen to have won. And then, ever since then, democratic powers basically trying to keep a hold of that power structure. With that status quo of democracies and capitalism very importantly being the done way that the world works

I: Hm…

S: and the thing is that when the world pushes against that, that’s when it gets violent. And it doesn’t have to be violence in terms of wars, it can be violence in terms of how projects are funded. It can be violence in terms of who is deemed worthy of you know, development aid or not. That kind of thing, you know. So that’s how it is conceived, which I think is interesting.
I: Yeah... it is fascinating. And so do you think that providing internet access can be both market-driven, and also a development priority at the same time?

A: I mean I guess to believe that you have to be a firm believer in the capitalist system. That the capitalist system is something that will always think of the best for society. And I don’t, so... and I’m very weary of private entities to be honest.

I: Hm...

A: When it comes to something that should be a state’s responsibility, I mean, it all sorts of boils down to how you see the world. And the world system in essence.

I: Yeah...

A: If you believe in the nation state, if you believe that this is the way that thing will always be. Then this is the way, you know you kind of always have to question it. That’s just how it works, and that’s how it would have to be because as it stands, many states can’t afford to provide the resources needed to fulfil economic, social and cultural rights, and that’s why they’re seen as aspirational, that’s why access isn’t seen as something that is enshrined because it’s not possible right now with the capacity that a lot of states have. And I’m not sure what the answer to that question is, you know it’s such a difficult one. The thing is you can see things shifting, you can see that there is like a shift from capital even being concentrated in the hands of powers to Eastern powers now.

I: Hm...

A: And in India, a developing power. You know, it’s interesting to see India especially as a developing country, but also a booming country.

I: Hm...

A: So you know they have this sort of two faces of being... bringing lots of people out of poverty, but again that’s how you define that, and you can even see it in the Asian Development Bank. They recently redefined that, to bring into play vulnerabilities and actually Asia hasn’t done that well (laughs)

I: (laughs)
A: You know, and the thing is when that happens it means that there’s a small sector of people who are benefitting, whereas a lot of people are just sort of left to fend for themselves

I: So inequalities are rising at all levels

A: At all levels exactly

I: Hm, and what do you think of the statement that ‘connectivity is a human right’, that we hear from different sides, for different reasons

A: Yeah, I mean I think we’ve touched upon that, bit in terms of connectivity being a human right, I do think that if connectivity is to be seen a human right, economic, social and cultural rights need to be developed and taken on as a priority, because until they are then, it will never be one. And, you know, as much as you want it to be, it’s not feasible, because resources aren’t geared that way. You know, so, it’s…. I think it is a key enabler of the way we live now, and when you think of the emerging technologies that are coming, the internet of things, you know…. You can imagine like cities where, you know, your fridge orders for you, self-driving cars, whatever like Jetsons’ kind of life, right and simultaneously a village where they don’t have water. If you think of these two things side by side, you can’t think of access as not being a human right

I: Hm…

A: It has to be because you know, it’s at the basis of poverty and inequality, and… I think it’s in the ICCPR, one of the covenants: the right to an adequate life. What that means, you know… and those economic rights shouldn’t be seen as aspirational, they shouldn’t be seen as ideological, because it affects people so profoundly

I: In a material way…

A: In a material way, also in terms of their own futures. I mean, they won’t have access to the same opportunities as everybody else, they will be stuck in one place, while the rest of the world progresses, and the rest of the world becomes you know becomes maybe this global connected world where borders mean less. But for these people, it will mean nothing. Hm, and I really think that did show in Brexit. Because I mean, these people who have maybe never left the UK, some people didn’t even have a passport. You know, they didn’t have money in the stock market. I’m not saying they were not
connected, I'm sure obviously they were, but it's tied up in many other things, you can't just provide internet access

I: Hm…

A: Connectivity is part of this all ream of things that needs to be… So it's like a package, if you know, people having the best life have it, people at the bottom should have it too, you know…

I: Hm… And so, what do you think is needed to make sure that what comes after access has been provided is beneficial to the community, and enables development?

A: Ok, hm, I think that goes into the question of you know, what constitutes adequate access and that is a question of who provides it, and with private sector companies coming in… with the Facebook Free Basics thing, it really was that there was of a two-tiered internet. If you can't… if you just give a walled garden, of like 'oh here is your internet access'… it doesn't actually solve anything because all it does is it makes sure that those people use that company's service

I: It invites them onto the platform so they actually want the rest of it

A: Exactly, hm, and it means that there is no way for innovation, there is no way for people to use it as a tool for themselves, it's very prescribed what they're able to use it for. So I think with access, if you want it to be an enabler for human rights, it has to be the full thing, and it has to be affordable, and it has to be fast.

I: Hm…

A: There needs to be proper infrastructure everywhere. And with access, with connectivity comes everyg. Like you can’t you know, a random sort of connection without being able to power it, and that's where a lot of developing countries fail. And a lot of developing countries fail on many accounts. Right now in Bangladesh for example, they're putting in solar panels

I: Yeah?

A: Actually my sister has done a documentary on this, I can share it with you if you want.

I: Yeah!
A: But she basically shows that solar power is seen like this silver bullet for development in Bangladesh

I: Hm…

A: But the quality of the power is not good enough, it doesn’t change things enough, so what it does…

I: And the money has been spent…

A: Exactly, and they’re pretty expansive. It’s not like they’re free, those people have to pay for it. I think they pay for a proportion of it, but that’s also lying to these people, basically saying that this will change your life, this will free up your time. Because it’s not a good enough energy to power washing machines, or fridges, things that actually save time for women.

I: Hm…

A: What it does is that it powers TVs, it powers phones, so people are connected. But then, it has this weird sort of awkward social impact where… It’s a very Islamic place, Bangladesh, and there are certain social norms of what women can and can’t do…

I: Hm…

A: But as well as… because there was no electricity grid there, it was based on migrant labor, so all the men would go away, to like Dubai, Qatar, and all those places, and work there for years. So sometimes the wives wouldn’t see their husbands for five years, and they’d come back. And during that time, before they had phones and everything, they had to go out, and go to the market, and do things by themselves, because it was necessary. Like it was practical, even though, it was like ‘this is not quite right, but I’ll go do it’, and they’d meet other women, do the washing and bla bla bla, go to the market… But with phones, what that meant is that they could call people to go and do it for them. And it was seen as if you can do that, why don’t you? Because it maintains cultural norms more

I: Oh ok…

A: So, an element of their freedom was actually rolled back with the phone, and it meant that husbands could keep tabs on them more. So it’s something that you would never ever think of…
I: Yeah...

A: But if you don’t provide things in the right way, if you don’t provide energy, the quality of it to the point that actually makes a difference, you know... The solar power also just generated light, and they were saying like you know, ‘this will free up everything, girls will be educated, it’s a new start in life’… But it didn’t free up they work time, you know, they had to work during the day, but because, there was this impetus of girls’ education, actually what happened is that guys wanted educated women for their boys...

I: Ah...

A: Which means they had to study in the evenings, after they’d done all their chores...

I: Alright, yeah...

A: Again, with all the pressure

I: Hm, you can’t really anticipate all of this

A: No, I mean it’s all very well intentions, that's the thing!

I: Well intentions, but not done in a right way… And when you say to do thing in a right way, do you mean put context into it?

A: Yeah, I mean this film was based on research, and at X (name of institution), I mean it’s not exactly the same, but it’s similar in analogy, in that if you provide something you have to provide it with inequalities in mind, with social norms in mind, with cultural norms in mind. And with you know, the basic economics of it, you know, you have to give the quality of the service enough to lift people out of their situation. Otherwise it just, I think, it just reinforces the divisions, and the... what’s the word... oppressions. The power structures that were there already basically. Because it doesn’t change enough.

I: Yeah, interesting... And what do you think... I mean we’ve talked about this a little bit, but what do you think is the main challenge in expanding access to India?

A: Hm, I think, in that sense, a lot of the same sort of gender norms that were in place in Bangladesh, are there too. So you know it’s not just about providing just access, it will have to be you know, educational programs, raising people from being banned
from a whole lot of things basically. Banned from entering work, from entering education, from being able to, you know, go out in the evening, you know…

I: Yeah…

A: It’s not just about providing access, because access is just about one part of a very developed state of life that people enjoy. So in India, it’s definitely wrapped up in a lot of gender, gendered norms. But as well as that, there are many divisions at play which have to be taken into account. And when certain classes, certain castes, or certain religions do better than others in a shared space, it can create a lot of tensions that arise…

I: Ok…

A: You know of a simple thing like food, and if the internet becomes seen as something as basic as food or water, it’s another thing you know, you have to make sure it’s equal.

I: Yeah… and how, how do you do that?

A: (laughs)

I: (laughs)

A: Money… money! And the right priorities, right development priorities, and I think it has to be joined up with a lot of other programs that are working on inequality. It’s not something by itself, it’s a piece of larger projects on dismantling poverty, on breaking inequalities. On making sure that… I guess it is those economic, social and cultural right, are realized. That’s what it is part of the package of. Maybe that’s a better framework to look at, in terms of, because once you have that, then the first generation of political and civil rights will be able… Like you will be able to realize them by default. Because you have the context in which you can.

I: So you need to in a way build a just system, before you put all of these things on top.

A: Yes, that’s’ a big task

I: Yeah… And finally, my last question is… very broad… but what do you think the future of internet governance is gonna entail, how do you see it happening?

A: Oh my God… practically, or?

I: With expanding access… Practically, or theoretically.
A: Hm, ok, with expanding access... I think, unfortunately, internet governance is gonna go a lot more in terms of geopolitical rivalries. And states kind of scrambling for a hold on power where different changes in networks, connectivity, whatever... are slowly taking that power out of their hands

I: Yes

A: Especially... even with the private sector coming in, I think states are beginning to realize that they're losing power in decision-making and many things. And you can see, even with the WSIS, you know, like it started with this bi development oriented thing, and then when it turned to the second phase, it had turned into an internet governance politicized summit

I: Hm... Yeah...

A: Where they were talking about you know, fragmenting the internet, and nationalizing bits...

I: Hm...

A: So if you want the future of connectivity, of access, in internet governance to be something that isn’t based on power rivalries, I don’t know how you would... I think it always will be. And with the way the security situation is going at the minute globally, it’s not going well...

I: Hm...

A: So I think security will become more and more of a concern. That’s why cyber security is a huge topic now. And as connectivity increases, I think a lot of governments will see that as yet more vulnerabilities.

I: Yeah...

A: Which means that there will be a very securitized way of looking at people’s access to the internet, a lot of people already paint the internet as like, ‘a den of criminals’... you know, like ‘it’s a place teaming with cyber-crimes’...

I: (laughs)

A: You know, ‘it’s something that’s bad, it’s dangerous... and there’s hate speech on there, we need to censor things, we need to have some sort of control’. So I think what
we need in terms of internet governance, two things will be at the top: geopolitical rivalries, and security, whether it is cyber security or called something else…

I: Ok…

A: And cyber security is so huge in itself, you know in terms of cyber-crimes, cyber-attacks, like between states

I: Yeah…

A: It's gonna be a whole new…

I: So there has to be a mechanism to make sure that everything is tackled. That the geopolitical is taken into account, that the governance side is taken into account, that those human rights, democratic… everything is…

A: Well, I mean, you have to… in terms of that it depends on which actors are involved, which actors have the most influence right. At the minute it’s states and companies, and a lot of the time companies will skew things in order to be in favor of the state to be the best contracts... So they’re not reliable. But a lot of states don’t want to listen to civil society, and human rights defenders, because it’s a threat to their power, so it’s a way of ensuring this sort of multi-stakeholder effort. Because the thing is those states need a lot of the technical community that are coming in and also fixing a lot of the vulnerabilities

I: Yeah… On the ground

A: On the ground, on the ground… But also innovating, you know, inventing you know things, and technological development is completely out there. So they need other stakeholders. But it’s a way of ensuring that those human rights perspectives, that those rights perspectives can be incorporated in that, and that’s really difficult…

I: Yeah… yes, it is. But I guess it’s not just with internet governance, it’s with any type of global governance

A: Exactly, exactly, and as our director A. always says, you know, ‘governments always are already competing coalitions of interests’. So within those, there are certain departments which will have more power than other, and human rights’ departments are those, unfortunately a trend of them basically being undermined. And their power lessening as time goes by. So it’s not even just like: states as one monolith, it’s like all
of these different interests, where economic and security interests will go up, and that they're rising and rising. And human rights are going down. So it's about balancing those, but how? ... Basically...

I: With people! Who know, who have a perspective of, you know... what's happening. And I guess the answer is in creating a constructive conversation in the first place, and trying to connects all the bits that are happening...

A: Hm... But as well as that, I mean I think, law. Law is a very useful tool. And is something that is done often very, agilely on like a case by case basis

I: Yeah...

A: And it's amazing how one case can change things for a whole country, so maybe if those economic and social rights are fought through the court, it could be something that it becomes, you know basic. Like freedom of expression is. Hm, and something that like then has to filter into countries' overall global stage

I: Hm...

A: But I think it probably has to come from bottom up, that change. Because at the minute people accept things the way they are

I: Yeah... Thank you! That was it for my questions...

A: Ok, cool!

I: Do you have any questions for me, or anything you want to highlight from the conversation that you think should really, really be highlighted?

A: (laughs) No, not really, I think you probably got my sort of main interest in security, that was quite apparent. And hm, yeah that basically security, inequality, sort of the global agenda, they all really go together. You know you can't really separate any of these things. And I think access is a really interesting sort of clash point where these sort of different arguments sort of come to a head.

I: Hm, exactly... Thank you!

A: No problem!

[conversation continues off the record]
7 - Analysis Steps

**Step 1:** Transcribe each interview just after it has taken place

**Step 2:** Nvivo classification, create ‘nodes’ for recurrent themes and sub-themes

*Legend from left to right: Nodes and Child-Nodes* (non-exhaustive list), transcript: the extract highlighted was selected and slid into one of the nodes folder for classification. This enabled to pull-out quotes and extracts from each transcript and associate them to a theme which I could then easily find when writing-up the analysis.

*Key Words/Themes:* Access (role, challenge, opportunities), Development (education, gender, priority, role of the state), Future, Level of engagement, Public/Private, Western

*Issue:* Visualization and quantification of data were not useful due to the qualitative nature of the research
**Step 3:** For a more qualitative analysis, I decided to move closer to the text and write-up a summary of each interview around the themes emerging both from the topic guide, and from the conversation itself. Adding some preliminary analytical comments.

**Step 4:** Pull out the trends emerging from each interview, and from the three groups previously identified as the object of analysis: Group L (local/grassroots), Group N (national), Group G (global).
- Layer 1: compare and contrast perspectives
- Layer 2: combine and connect perspectives, with reference to the literature
  ⇒ Allow for time to move from the 1st to the 2nd layer

**Step 5:** Summarize and problematize observations, linking them back to the literature.

8- ICT4D disciplinary foundations (Heeks, 2010:7)
9- ICT4D value chain (Heeks, 2010:3)

Figure 1. The ICT4D value chain.

10- From RIPE to EIPE (Hobson & Seabrooke, 2007: 6)

Table 1.1: Juxtaposing Aims and Approaches in Regulatory and Everyday IPE

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<td>Selection bias</td>
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Phenomenological interviewing (Bevan, 2014: 139)

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Figure 1. A structure of phenomenological interviewing.

List of Acronyms

**WSIS** – World Summit on the Information Society

**WB** – World Bank

**APC** – Association for Progressive Communications

**CSDHN** - Civil Society Declaration for Human Needs

**ITU** - International Telecommunications Union

**UNESCO** – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

**ICANN** – Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

**NOFN** - National Optical Fibre Network

**RTI** – Right to Information Act

**VSNL** - Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited, now Tata Communications

**TRAI** – Telecom Regulatory Authority of India