



THE GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY PROJECT

A RESEARCH COLLABORATION OF THE WORLD POLICY INSTITUTE AND THE
CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY
WWW.GLOBAL-INFO-SOCIETY.ORG

ABOUT GISP:

The Global Information Society Project (GISP) is a collaborative research project between the World Policy Institute (WPI) [www.worldpolicy.org] and the Center for Advanced Studies in Science and Technology Policy (CAS) [www.advancedstudies.org] focused on information, communications, and technology policy and related issues, especially as such policy impacts on the development of global civil society, international relations, world trade, global economic development, capital investment, and national and global security.

GISP seeks to identify and articulate through its research programs the key issues that lie at the intersection of technologically enabled change and existing information and communication practices in particular areas of national and international public policy, law and industry.

Kim Taipale, executive director of CAS and a senior fellow at the World Policy Institute, is the director of the Global Information Society Project. Mr. Taipale has over twenty years of diverse experience relating to information, communications, and technology policy and issues.

Project Overview.

It is cliché, of course, to say that the world is at the beginning of an information revolution that, in historical retrospect, will have as profound affect on global social evolution, political and economic power allocation, and general policy development as did the industrial revolution. Nevertheless, advanced information, communication and media technologies have already significantly transformed the existing world order and they continue to unleash powerful forces that increasingly realign political, economic, and social relationships. [1]

These same technological forces that have the power to undermine totalitarian public regimes and destabilize entrenched private economic orders, however, can also threaten both legitimate public authority as well as individual liberties and future economic and social development if existing regulatory structures and policies are unable to easily adapt to the new environment.

These challenges are particularly acute in information and communication policy where regulation and control based on traditional nation-state jurisdiction and geographically determined regulatory structures and economic interests are undermined by the global nature of the information infrastructure and new communication capabilities. Applying different national rules to global information flows raises serious efficacy issues and brings into direct conflict disparate approaches and standards for regulating information and the political and economic power that results from such controls.

How we structure and allocate rights in the physical infrastructure that mediates these information flows and human communications (that is, telecommunications policy); how we regulate the creation and use of information and knowledge (intellectual property); how we balance the rights between individual users (privacy law and free expression) and society (cybercrime, law enforcement, and national security); and how we apply the infrastructure and information technologies to manage global institutions and development (as agent of change in globalization, liberalization, and international development) is the focus of the Global Information Society Project. [2]

Areas of Research Focus.

I. The Global Information Society – An Overview:

How do developments in information technology challenge existing institutions and power structures in both the public and private spheres? How does information and communications policy impact the distribution of political and economic power? Is technology development a political determinant?

II. The Global Information Society and the Future of the Nation-state:

Political systems and political control are based on geographically determined organizations – nation-states. How is this method of organizing political power challenged through the emergence of a global information society in which the primary sphere of social, political and economic activity takes place within a global information infrastructure and communication flows are no longer confined by national borders.

III. The Global Information Society and the World Economy:

Information technology and modern transportation infrastructure enabled the globalization of manufacturing and manual labor by providing control and management mechanisms to run far-flung global economic enterprises. The emergence of a ubiquitous worldwide telecommunications network has further enabled the globalization of capital, services, and technical/professional labor. What next?

IV. Global Information Society and Intellectual Property:

Is intellectual property policy a key determinant in trade liberalization and economic development or the instrument of intellectual colonization and global imperialism? GISP examines WIPO, TRIPS, and intellectual property as international trade issues.

V. Global Information Society and Democratization:

Are advanced information and communications technologies agents of change towards free expression and political/economic liberalization or towards greater political and economic concentration, censorship, and increased government control?

VI. The Global Information Society and Cybercrime:

The emergence of a global information society facilitates and enhances opportunities for transnational cybercrime. The divergence between global information flows and nation-state regulatory jurisdiction leads to "regulatory arbitrage" where inconsistent and incompatible regulatory regimes result in "flag of convenience" forum shopping that can lead to the lowest- (in the case of crime) or highest- (in the case of government control over civil liberties) common denominator regime asserting jurisdiction. Where does cybercrime take place and who can or should have jurisdiction? How can cybercrime across jurisdictional lines be prevented, controlled, mitigated, or responded to?

VII. The Global Information Society, Security, and Privacy

New information technologies have the potential to significantly affect how information is collected, shared and analyzed by law enforcement and national and international security agencies in response to certain perceived threats. These developments, however, may have a significant impact on freedom and individual liberties, such as free speech, political autonomy, public anonymity, and personal secrecy. How can the dual obligations of collective security and individual liberty be met within the global information society?

VIII. The Global Information Society, Cybersecurity, and Information Operations

The Global Information Society is vulnerable to physical and cyber-attack on its information flows and its supporting infrastructure. Information is an instrument of political and economic power and control over its use, its protection, and its manipulation has international and national security implications. Offensive and defensive information operations by and among nation-states, private organizations, hostile networks, and individuals are increasingly perceived as strategic and tactical components of global conflict and national power. What mechanisms of control exist or will emerge to address these issues?

References:

- [1] K. A. Taipale, *"Advanced Media: Convergent Paths,"* Strategic Plan, New York: MediaCapital (1989).
- [2] K. A. Taipale, *"Prelim. Research Overview 2003-2004,"* Center for Advanced Studies, (Dec. 2002).

See also CAS Publications at www.advancedstudies.org/cas/publications.html.

More information at www.global-info-society.org.