# Information Ecology and Information Society

- ## Information ecology

  - ### Information systems as critical ecosystems
    - interrelated, interdependent structures & processes
    - interactive, evolving ecosystems
    - critical relationship with other ecosytems
      - social, institutional, economic, legal, cultural and natural

  - ### Holistic framework
    - Bridging material and virtual
    - Bridging technical and social

- Information space - virtual territory

  – Transactional space
    - Communications
    - Information exchange
    - Market
    - Meeting space

  – We live more and more in information space
    - Almost all of the space is private

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- Public information space

  - How is public information space established?

  - Characteristics of public space
    - Freedom of assembly
    - Freedom of speech
    - Freedom of access
    - Rules / norms of behaviour?

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- The global conferences

  - 1992 - Earth Sumit - Rio de Janeiro

  - 1993 - Human Rights - Vienna

  - 1994 - Population & Development - Cairo

  - 1995 - Social Development - Copenhagen

  - 1995 - Women - Beijing

  - 1996 - Human Settlements - Istanbul

  - Global spaces for civil society

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- ## The global conferences
  - – Common, evolving themes
    - Broad-based participation
    - Role of "major groups" in society, including
      - – Non-governmental organizations
      - – Women, Youth, Indigenous
      - – Labour, Business, Farmers, Science & Technology
      - – Local Governments
    - Inclusion of marginal, disadvantaged groups
    - Development of civil society
    - Partnership

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- ## Information technology & global conferences

  - – Enabling framework for

    - Access to information
    - Access to documents

    - Participation in dialogue
    - Participation in decision-making
    - Participation in follow-up action

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- Electronic mailing lists - the key tool

  – Access via routine process - checking mail

  – Ease of use - receiving and sending

  – Eliminates need to search for news

  – Platform-independent - minimal requirements

- Electronic mailing lists - disadvantages

  – Lack of access

    - Poor, disadvantaged

    - Elderly

    - Technically

    - Areas without adequate information infrastructure

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- Electronic mailing lists - disadvantages

  – Too much electronic mail

    - Time consuming - to download and digest

    - Costly when online time is expensive

  – Some email software is not user-friendly

  – Language - most lists are in English

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- Electronic mailing lists - bonus features

  - Automatic filtering of messages

  - Automatic hot links to web sites

  - Web access to messages & archives

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- Electronic mailing lists - moderated lists

  - Eliminates duplicate messages

  - Eliminates/reduces "off-subject" messages

  - Allows clean-up of messy formatting

  - Intercepts "attached files"

  – Takes time and effort to moderate

- Electronic mailing lists - mailbase

  - File storage area makes key documents accessible

  - Files / documents can be retrieved via email

  - Messages acessible and searchable on web

  - Allows more than one moderator and "owner"

  - More information at http://www.mailbase.ac.uk

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- ## Electronic mailing lists - egroups

  - ### Lists / groups can be set up instantly

  - ### Lists are free with ads, $5/month without

  - ### Messages acessible and searchable on web

  - ### Limited flexibility in moderating lists

  - ### More information at http://www.egroups.com

- Electronic mailing lists - examples

  - NGOs at UN Commission on Sustainable Development
    - [csdgen] - <csdgen@undp.org>
  - Habitat Partners Network
    - [partners] - <h2o-L@undp.org>
  - Multilateral Agreement on Investment
    - [mai] - <adhoc-L@undp.org>
  - European Conference on Environment & Health
    - [eh99] - <eh99gen@oneworld.org>
  - Millennium Peoples Assembly Network
    - [passem] - <passem@undp.org>

- Multilateral Agreement on Investment

  - Network guerrillas
    - "... the growing power of lobby groups and their use of the Internet is changing the nature of international economic negotiations"
      - Financial Times, 1998.04.30

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- ## Some Implications
  - – Need for civil society / non-profit sector to
    - Strengthen capacity in use of information technology
      - – Commitment of energy and resources
      - – Training & support in all aspects
    - Develop & advocate inclusive, accessible processes
    - Create & defend public online space
    - Focus on big picture and on practical implementation
    - Establish & support "information ecology" NGOs
      - – Closely monitor new trends & developments
      - – Understand & practice information ecology