

Successful Governments and Civil Society Partnership at the Marrakech Conference that Focused on Freedom of Expression

The International Conference as a follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) on the Role and Place of Media in the Information Society in Africa and the Arab States took place from 22 to 24 November 2004 in Marrakech, Morocco. Organised by Orbicom under the leadership of its President Alain Modoux with the assistance of its Moroccan Chairholder Jamal Naji, in partnership with the Government of Morocco, and with the formal support of UNESCO, the UN Department of Public Information, the Swiss Government, "La Francophonie", the GKP and others, attracted more than 250 participants including ministers of 7 governments of the region, a first in partnership between governments and civil society.

The 3 day conference allowed experts of the media from Africa and the Arab States, and the representatives of the main international associations of professionals, to interact between themselves and with government representatives reaching a rare convergence of opinions among the different groups. Many Orbicom chairholders and associate members who were present in Marrakech also played substantial roles as speakers, moderators, rapporteurs and drafters of the final declaration.

Among achievements, the Marrakech forum spoke out unequivocally about not allowing concerns of Internet governance to open the door for heavy handed regulation of the Internet. The Marrakech Declaration encouraged "better cooperation on Internet management" and called for "respect of multilinguism" and "affordable global connectivity". It also emphasised that "national security and the battle against crime and terrorism" should not be used as a pretext to imperil freedom of expression and press freedom. The Marrakech Declaration and its Plan of Action unanimously adopted by the participants including the government representatives who attended the



Conference now constitute a substantial contribution towards the debate of the second phase of the WSIS which will take place in Tunis next November. The Marrakech Declaration and its Plan of Action have been formally forwarded to the principal international stakeholders responsible for the Tunis Summit: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, UNESCO's Director-General, Koichiro Matsuura and Ambassador Janis Karklins, President of the Tunis phase Prepcoms. The Conference's documents are available for consultation on the Conference's Web site.

<http://www.mincom.gov.ma/mediaconference>

What the Orbicom Network Should Be



Let me start with an observation of what we are already doing that is on the right track. First, Orbicom is a network, and a virtual one at that. This allows us to tap resources from anywhere and deliver our interventions globally. Second, we are practicing a multi-stakeholder partnership model of collaboration between the academic community, decision-makers and professionals. If there is any relatively weak representation, it may be industry and the (wider) community sector. Third, we have quality projects in hand which can be expanded and sustained for the next few years.

However, it will be a grave mistake to rest on our laurels. The success achieved thus far should be used as a launching pad to achieve more. In the brainstorming session (during the Board of Directors' meeting, Marrakech, 21 November 2004) many challenges have already been identified, which I shall not repeat here. What is worth emphasizing is that we need to reinvent ourselves in order to remain relevant.

The network model should be leveraged to expand the influence and prestige of Orbicom without unduly increasing its complexity. At least in theory, networks are built from nodes that are interconnected. Nodes in small geographical areas are linked to form clusters. Hubs are created when clusters generate sustainable dynamics of local and external sharing through spokes that link to other hubs. The greater the number of nodes, clusters, hubs and links, and the richer the information flow between them, the better will be the quality of the network.

It seems to me that Orbicom should move to the next level of network sophistication by stimulating the growth of clusters that are centred around its current nodes. I note that although these nodes are naturally located at the UNESCO chairs, there may well be associates who may equally perform this function. By creating clusters in geographically close communities, we will be able to tap more local resources without the additional management overhead that normally comes with expansion.

And by linking the clusters and hubs together we can maintain the integrity of the network, including the clarity and coherence of the vision, mission and objectives.

To make all of these parts work smoothly and efficiently together, there needs to be a strong moderating influence. Thus, I am not in favour of reducing the role of the "mother node" that is Montreal and UQAM at the moment. However, a networked governance structure should be employed for the moderator to "listen" to network members and to develop consensus among them. Thus, this scheme is neither top-down nor bottom-up. It is a decentralized and "flat" structure with shared intelligence.

As I tried to emphasize during the discussion, the withdrawal of Orbicom central now may create a vacuum to the detriment of the community. The "institutional memory" residing there is also essential to maintain the links to, and support of the stakeholders. These include the academics, professionals and the decision-makers in government or the private sector. Of all the stakeholders, I am personally sensitive to the needs of governments. I think all governments in place are fully aware of the rapidly-changing situation. They gained ascendancy during times of information asymmetry between the rulers and the ruled. But the Internet has made the relationship more symmetrical. They know they have to change, but they fear what change will imply to their power structures. Yet they probably have a greater fear of being left behind in the race among nations.

This is where Orbicom can come in. At this stage, a major role that Orbicom can play is to assist governments in introducing more shared systems of governance without them necessarily losing control of the situation. Following the comments of one of our members, I agree that we should projectize more of our work. I also suggest that we productize the projects. We mean this in two ways. First, each project should result in a document that can easily and immediately be implemented. In other words, the document as an intellectual product is complete and executable to produce another product. Second, the process of creating the document can be templated, such that it can be applied repeatedly in different locations and situations. Thus, the experience gained becomes embedded in the process, enabling a less trained consultant or implementer to approach the same level of performance as the expert. The network model is fundamental in accomplishing the above programme.

While the present network has a certain capacity already, it can be quickly built up to achieve an order of magnitude expansion with a much smaller incremental investment. Global and international experience can be brought to bear to solve local problems. And clusters and hubs can be rapidly built to serve the needs of local and global stakeholders.

As I mentioned in our post-meeting discussion, this theory can be tested in a number of locations that Orbicom is already present in. Assuming it is a country-level interaction (it can also be regional, for example), Orbicom may initiate a meeting through its local member to create a cluster. A country project may be used as the kick-off event. The work scope is defined and the work equitably shared. To be sure, Orbicom as the cluster champion will bring unique expertise to address the challenge in play. In the process, Orbicom will also bring international and global expertise to the table by invoking its network of experts. This process can be tried and tested in different locations, so that it too can projectized and productized.

Dr. Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen
Vice-president of Orbicom

Orbicom Directors Meet in Marrakech

At the time the decision was made last winter to organise the Marrakech Conference, the need to hold the first in situ meeting of Orbicom's Board of Directors since 1999 was expressed by several Board members. The Marrakech Conference provided the venue. Thirteen of the fifteen Board members were able to travel from all over the world to participate in the Conference and the Board meeting. Director-General of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, institutional ex-officio member, was represented by Dr. Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, while Rector Roch Denis mandated Secretary-General Claude-Yves Charron to represent the UQAM, the other institutional ex-officio member. Orbicom also celebrated, in Marrakech, its 10th Anniversary and shared this good moment with friends of the network during a reception President Alain Modoux and Secretary-General Charron jointly hosted on 21 November after the Board meeting.

The Board elected its new Vice-president, Dr Tengku Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen in replacement of Prof. José Carreño Carlón, and its new Treasurer, Prof. Gabriela Warkentin de la Mora, in replacement of Dr Ellen A. Wartella. Aside the statutory items of the Board's agenda, the meeting allowed for substantial exchanges of ideas (see text of Orbicom's new Vice-president on page 2), and continued informally, at breakfast time, during the subsequent three days. What is called the "Marrakech Roadmap: the next 10 years" was drafted by several Board members who tasked themselves with objectives and deliverables for April 1, 2005.



In situ meeting of Orbicom's Board of Directors, 21 November, in Marrakech

Board members recognised that Orbicom has a competitive advantage over other communication networks on account of its multi-stakeholder membership (academia/industry/ngo/policymakers), its cross disciplinary expertise, its global coverage and regional expertise, and its unique comparative capabilities. They also perceive Orbicom as the network of "networks". However, they identified core challenges that need to be addressed in the immediate if the network is to develop over the next 10 years: issues like the sustainability of the network, leveraging its value, current engagements and incentives for new engagements, branding and capitalising existing investments and results (marketing and packaging) and above all the challenge of virtual existence.

The Editor
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New Board Members

During the September 2004 AGM, the following Orbicom members were appointed or reappointed to Orbicom's Board of Directors :

- Jan Annerstedt, Danish Chair
- Reinhart Helmke, Former Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations
- Gabriela Warkentin de la Mora, Mexican Chair
- Mohd Tengku Shariffadeen, President of Mimos, Malaysia
- Rosental Calmon Alves, USA Chair
- Jamal Eddine Naji, Moroccan Chair
- Ruth Teer-Tomasselli) South African Chair

Orbicom Forum wishes them a fruitful mandate.

Nuestra gratitud a los amigos que dejan el Consejo de Administración

Gracias a nuestro vicepresidente saliente José Carreño Carlón que nos ha representado tan bien y que asoció Orbicom a los proyectos de su cátedra: gracias a nuestra generosa tesorera Ellen Wartella que no dudó nunca en financiar personalmente la promoción de Orbicom y de sus proyectos en Austin, Nueva York y Washington; gracias a Yasuhiko Kawasumi por sus discretos esfuerzos en favor de Orbicom en Japón, en la UIT y en otros lados: gracias a Kyunsook Lee por sus apoyos en los foros asiáticos; finalmente gracias a Gabriel-Jaime Pérez-Montoya que dejó la Cátedra Unesco en Bogotá para aceptar la función de Vicerector en la Universidad Javeriana de Cali.

Publications



L'information-communication, objet de connaissance, par Bernard Miège

Au cours des vingt dernières années, l'information et la communication ont donné lieu à de nombreuses publications où cependant dominent les essais, les coups de force théoriques, les anticipations, les descriptions technologiques ou les témoignages. C'est d'autant plus surprenant que, dans le même temps, les sciences de l'information et de la communication sont loin d'être restées inactives, leur productivité et leur pertinence commencent à être reconnues, et elles ont acquis progressivement une légitimité certaines, gênante pour les disciplines en place.

Au-delà des travaux portant sur les médias, sur les techniques de l'information et de la communication, ou sur les différents champs où la communication se déploie, est-il possible de développer une analyse argumentée de l'information-communication qui ne cède pas devant les risques de généralisations abusives ou de prophéties rarement vérifiées?

L'auteur qui se refuse toujours à envisager la perspective d'une théorie générale, fonde son approche autour de quatre dimensions: la relation information-communication; l'identification de logiques sociales de la communication; la référence à une théorie de l'action qui donne toute sa place à l'action communicationnelle; et un plaidoyer pour l'interdisciplinarité. Les contributions qui composent l'ouvrage sont constituées à la fois d'articles déjà publiés (souvent dans des langues autres que le français) qui ont donné lieu à des modifications substantielles, et d'inédits.

Dans la collection *Médias Recherches*, De Boeck / INA, 248 pages.

Bernard Miège, est professeur de sciences de la communication à l'Université Stendhal Grenoble 3 où il participe au laboratoire GRESEC (groupe de recherche sur les enjeux de la communication), <http://www.u-grenoble3.fr/gresec>.

Theories of Mass Communication, by Todor Petev

The book provides a comprehensive introduction covering a range of approaches, concepts, and theories of mass communication. The text encompasses diverse forms of mass communication in contemporary society - television, radio, newspapers, film, and electronic technologies like Internet. The author represents theories of communication that still have their impact on current research perspectives.

The research topics have been presented in their authentic form of emergence, and updated to take account of recent theory and research developments. Topics given greater attention include limited effects paradigm, the functional analysis approach, the two-step flow of communication, uses-gratifications and effects approach, communication of social innovations, cultivation analysis, agenda-setting theory, spiral of silence, news production research, infotainment, media intrusion in politics, communication issues of globalization, and the "network state".

The central point of the book is the asymmetrical development of main communication trends, and the cutting edge of communication practice. The text focuses the student attention on critical thinking questions.

Sofia: University of Sofia, 2004, 197 p.

Shaping Tomorrow's Media System Edited by Elena L. Vartanova and Yassen N. Zassoursky

A new book has been published by the Moscow based UNESCO Chair in Journalism and Mass Communication. It is based on the materials of the conference which was organised by the Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University, in cooperation with ORBICOM and financed by the UNESCO Moscow Office. Requests for the book should be sent to eva@journ.msu.ru (the book is free, expenses for mail delivery might be negotiated).

More details on the Orbicom's website, section "Chairs"

Conferences

WSIS Regional Conference Africa

2-4 February 2005
Accra, Ghana
<http://www.wsisaccra2005.gov.ph>

ExpoComm 2005

8-11 February 2005
Mexico, Mexique
<http://expocomm.com/mexico>

PrepCom-2 of the Tunis phase

17-25 February 2005
Geneva, Switzerland
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory2/pc2/index.html>

SVIAZ/Expo Comm

10-14 May 2005
Moscou, Russie
<http://www.expocomm.com/moscow>

"Public Communication and Globalization: Education in the Values of Democracy"

20-21 May 20 2005
Sofia, Bulgaria
<http://www.aubg.edu>

WSIS Regional Conference Latin America and the Caribbean

8-10 June 2005
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
<http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory2/index.html>

World Summit on the Information Society Sommet mondial sur la société de l'information

Cumbre mundial sobre la sociedad de la información
16-18 November 2005
Tunis, Tunisia
<http://www.itu.int/wsis>

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