



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





- 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?





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





- 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





- 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





- 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





- 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





- Electronic mailing lists bonus features
 - Automatic filtering of messages
 - Automatic hot links to web sites
 - Web access to messages & archives





- 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





- 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





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