Accelerating Change in Global Governance: Enhancing the Participation of Excluded and Marginalized Voices Through Information and Communication Technology

Working Group
ISA Annual Convention, Baltimore 2017

Sponsored by:
- International Communication Section (ICOMM)
- Active Learning in International Affairs Section (ALIAS)
- Global Development Studies Section (GDS)
- Human Rights Section (HR)
- International Organization Section (IO)

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Objective:

1. Catalyze a network of interdisciplinary scholars interested in understanding the theoretical foundation of and practical remedies for enhancing the participation of excluded and marginalized voices in global governance, with a particular focus on the human rights issues of more than 1 billion persons with disabilities;
2. Develop a model and set of recommendations for the use of information and communication technologies and active learning approaches to facilitate the active involvement of excluded voices in specific global governance processes (such as the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the HLPF); and
3. Facilitate interaction between this network, relevant civil society organizations, interested programs within the UN, and governments to encourage change in World Politics.

Overview:

The 2017 ISA Theme is Exploring Change in World Politics. While drivers of change come in multiple forms, one major area that has been under-explored by International Relations scholars is the impact of excluding and marginalizing certain voices in global governance processes (including minority populations, refugees, and other sub-state actors). While each of these communities is unique, with its own problems and challenges, there are also similarities across these excluded and marginalized voices. There are also numerous lessons to be learned from attempts to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to address these challenges. Particular amongst these marginalized voices is the community of more than a billion persons in the world living with some form of disability (WHO, 2011) and the human rights issues they face. Nearly 15% of every country's population on average is likely to be a person with a disability. Many of these persons with disabilities organize their policy advocacy through Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) and related networks. Several international processes, such as the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, are creating opportunities for civil society and persons with disabilities to participate. However, even though this trend towards multistakeholder participation in global governance has opened up space for civil society broadly speaking, it has not fully enabled persons with disabilities to participate in UN conferences, meetings, and events. With the notable exception of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the annual Conference of State Parties (COSP) to the CRPD, persons with disabilities and DPOs have traditionally had only limited impact on these international decision-making processes. However, through a wide variety of strategic efforts in the use of ICTs to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in global governance processes, that situation is beginning to change. It is possible that through these efforts, the global disability community may come to be seen as a model for the
Scholars from five ISA organized sections related to this problem will be recruited to participate in this Working Group, including: (1) International Communication Section (ICOMM); (2) Active Learning in International Affairs Section (ALIAS); (3) Global Development Studies Section (GDS); (4) Human Rights Section (HR); and (5) International Organization Section (IO). During the Working Group meetings, these scholars will be introduced to and will engage with members of various United Nations programs interested in the question of Accessible Global Governance as well as leaders in relevant international disabled persons organizations, other non-governmental organizations, and selected national governments. After the opening workshop on Tuesday, 21 February, Working Group members will be encouraged to participate in a selected set of ISA panels related to the overall theme, and to gather briefly each day during the conference for lunch, to discuss the lessons learned and actionable insights coming from the panels. The goal is to enable the International Studies Association to serve as a catalyst for this important global network. In order to support the Working Group before the conference, during, and afterwards, all participants will be added to the Disability-Inclusive Development (DID) Collaboratory Portal as an additional network (networks already exist on the portal for networks related to Habitat III, SDGs/HLPF, DRR, WSIS+10, and CRPD). The DID Collaboratory includes a range of social and technical processes and tools for member profiles and information, support for real-time virtual meetings, and access to synchronous and asynchronous content.