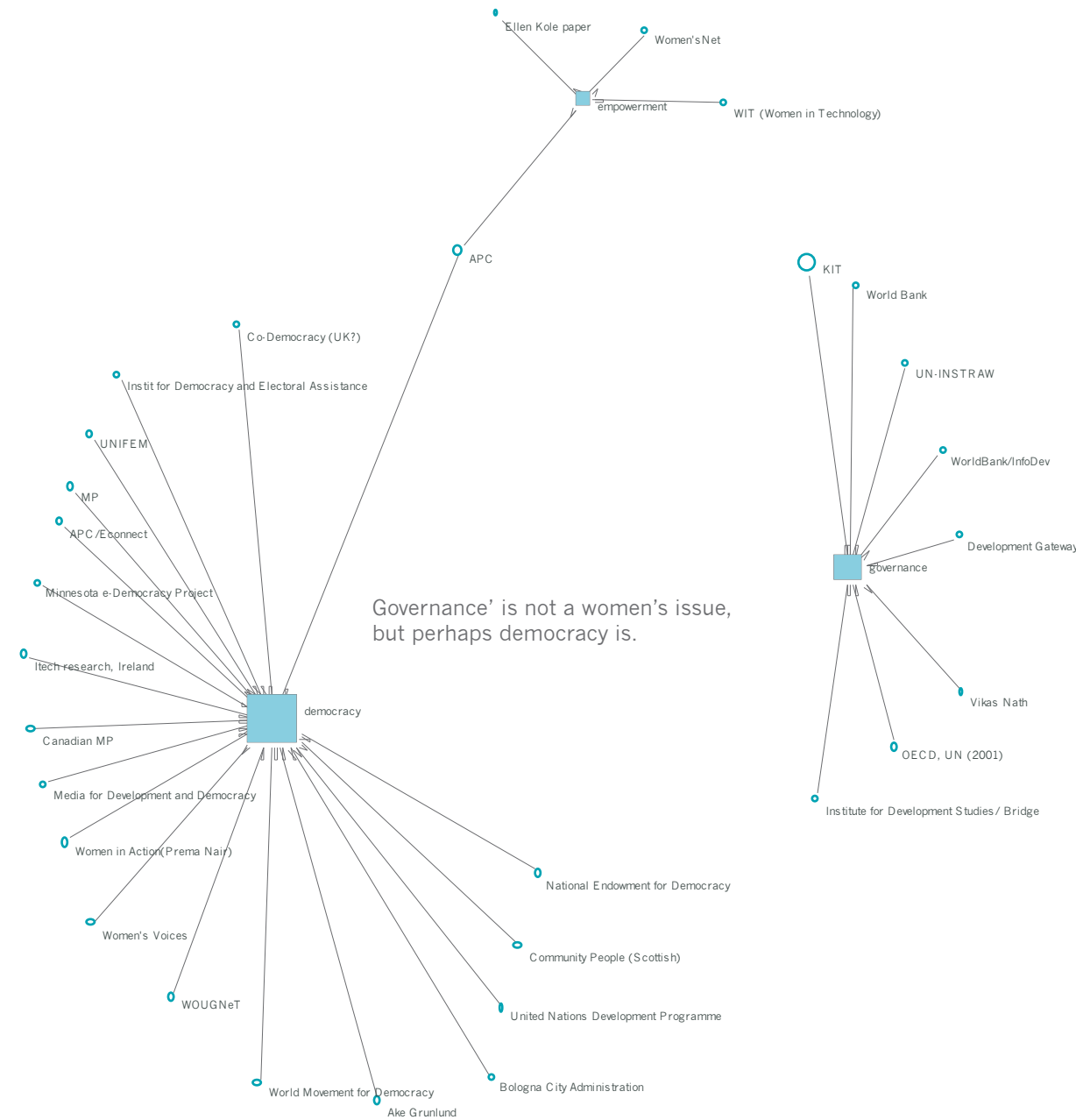
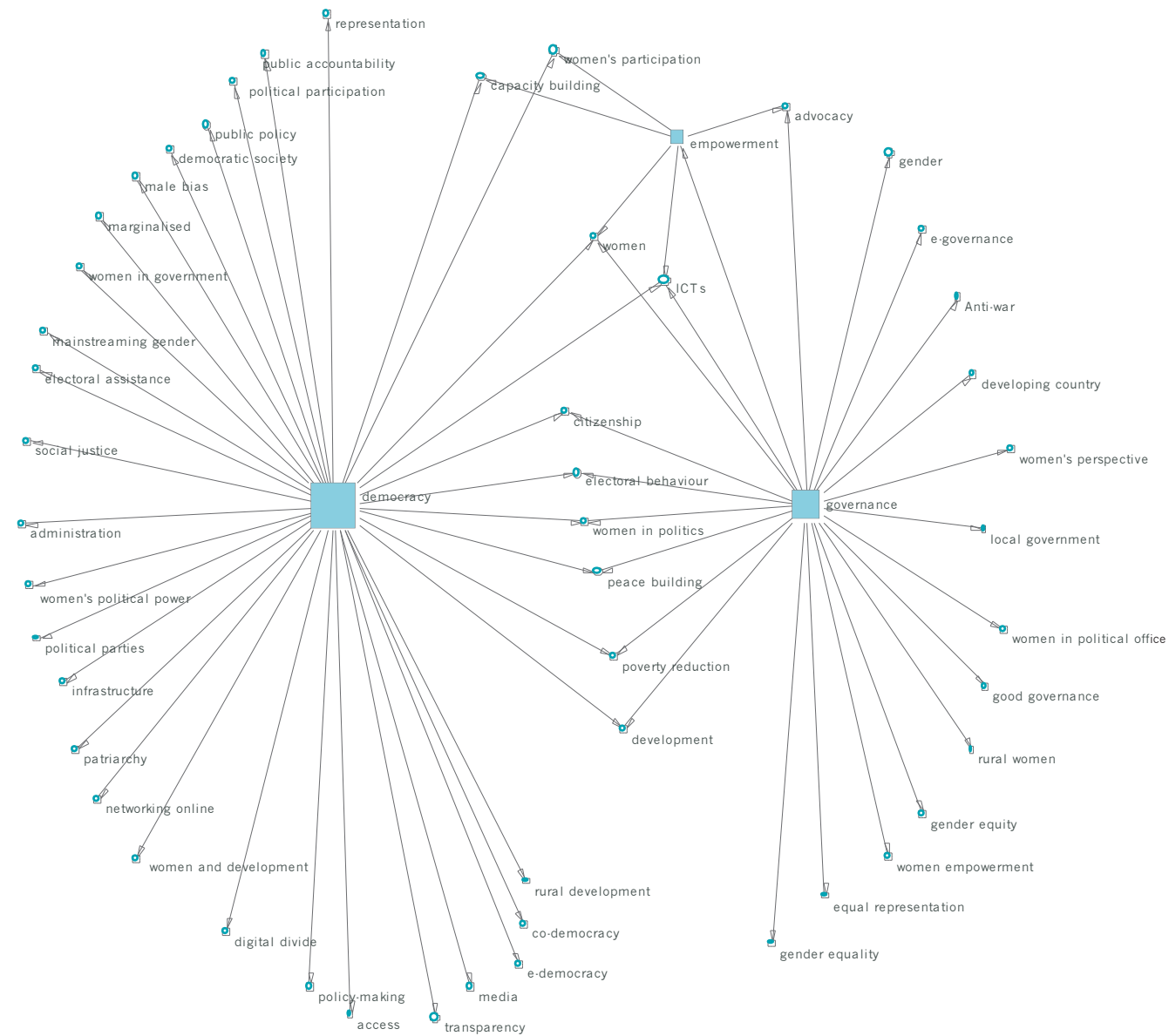


Is e-governance a women's issue?



Governance' is not a women's issue, but perhaps democracy is.



Where should the 'e' be inserted, if at all?
It should be inserted into the vocabulary of democracy and ICTs, as opposed to governance and ICTs.

Introduction

One of us works for a women's organisation called Women's Net, and she is considering to organise a workshop on women and e-governance. As we are not very familiar with this issue-space, and also, as we wonder whether the teaming up of women and governance is really helpful in the light of the objectives of women's organisations, we ask: is e-governance a women's issue, and should it be one?

Actor-Issue Map: governance is not a women's issue

Querying Google for the terms *women*, *ICT* and *governance*, our suspicions are affirmed: *governance* only appears on the sites of international governing bodies. The term seems to have little to no life beyond the confines of these upper echelons. Virtually no women's organisations are attached to this term. Coupling the query terms *women* AND *ICT*

with *democracy* AND *empowerment*, on the other hand, women's organisations do show up on our maps.

Issue-Map: Governance is not a women's issue, but could democracy be?

If women's organisations are to become active in this issue area, it seems more appropriate to take up (one of) the other two terms, democracy and empowerment, and attempt to pull the issue-network towards them. But which of the two terms is in this respect more appropriate? One thing to notice is that the term *democracy* brings along a particularly rich vocabulary, one that is both critical and constructive. (Attached to democracy, we find *marginalisation* and *male bias*, but also *women in politics* and *accountability*.) The term *democracy* seems to take into account both the frustrations of women, as well as their aspirations. The term *empowerment*, on the other


hand, emerges here as a relatively poor term -- likewise *governance*, incidentally, which brings along an exclusively positive vocabulary, a feel good melody of "making things better."

Conclusion

There is at least one catch, as the terms that come with democracy are rather theoretical. There is talk of patriarchy here... In this respect, a crucial question is, how can the notion of democracy also begin to cover a feminist practice? One answer is to drag the term *advocacy* (which is currently linked to *empowerment*) into the democratic space. Women's Net, which is now attached to *empowerment*, should not move into the governance issue-space. Governance is not a women's issue. But if Women's Net would decide to move into the world of democracy instead, it would do well to bring along one of its key issues, *advocacy*.

Legend: ■ Key terms
○ Websites

Maps generated from Réseau-Lu by Aguidel.com.

Govcom.org Issue Mappings		2005
WSIS according to civil society		
WSIS edition	05	Thanks to the Social Science Research Council's Information Technology and International Cooperation Program.
Product of the APC/Govcom.org workshop, <i>Issue Network Interventions: The Problem of Information Formats</i> . Cartagena, Colombia, October 2003.		
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