Seoul Searching: OECD Ministerial Participants’ Views on the Future of ICT’s
Ashley C. Barnas (Professor Janna Anderson) School of Communications

A video ethnography and content study of leading economists and other attendees was conducted at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's ministerial meeting on the future of the Internet economy. Results collected from the 31 interviews focus on the evolution of information and communication technologies. From June 16-18, 2008, the ministerial meeting in Seoul, Korea, was the OECD’s first since the 1990s. I conducted 31 interviews with foreign ministers, business leaders, technical experts, and representatives of civil society and academia. At the OECD ministerial event, these groups of people conferred with the goal of comparing experiences, seeking answers to common problems, and coordinating domestic and international policies. The OECD comprises 30 nations and is an international organization headquartered in a secretariat based in Paris. It has 200 committees, working groups, and expert groups that collect data, monitor trends, research social changes and evolving patterns in trade, environment, technology and other areas and forecast economic developments. In the voluntary interviews of about 5 to 10 minutes each, I asked for interviewees' perspectives on the future of the Internet, what Internet governance issues are the most difficult to resolve to everyone's satisfaction, and other questions tailored to each person's area of expertise. After transcribing the full content of all 31 interviews, I conducted a content analysis, searching for and coding common themes among the different sectors represented at the meeting. Among the findings: recurring concerns for the future of the Internet include privacy in regard to social media, safety for children, and access to information and educational content for all people, everywhere.