INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter examined the history, structure, and practices of the principal international standards-setting organizations, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), with particular attention to their composition, the public/private nature of their organizations, the interests they serve, and their processes. The present chapter will examine current discourse on standardization and the rise of the consortia movement. It will do so first by framing the debate within general structural and openness issues and then by looking at specific rhetorical examples of arguments, claims, and controversies. It will then establish a taxonomy of arguments and rhetorical discourses, focusing on the issue of legitimation of consortia standardization. It will next analyze several important cases, looking at public documents, testimony, and reports. In doing so, it will examine the specific claims to legitimacy made by consortia and traditional bodies. It will seek to clarify how the practice of standardization is being discursively
re-constructed. Finally it will consider international, institutional, and industrial responses to these claims of legitimacy and to the political/economic pressures they have brought.

The reader should remember that consortia and the more formal standards-setting organizations come in many forms. This book is really about the rhetorical construction of arguments in light of theoretical areas that can be applied to standards and standardization as a whole—it is not about attempting any general theory of standards or of consortia, nor is it an inventory of their benefits and shortcomings. Rather, it searches for common elements between each of these two groupings and for the most basic principles that distinguish them from each other.

**STRUCTURE AND OPENNESS**

This section will examine the discourse on standards and standardization in order to identify the broader issues and the terminology that set the stage for a detailed analysis of the discourse. These issues include the structure of standardization, the openness of its practices and processes, institutional motivation, and forms of enclosure that are interwoven in the standards environment. In particular, this section will focus on the key issue of claims to legitimacy that are made by the various actors in the debate. This focus will provide a framework for establishing a taxonomy of arguments in the following section.

**Discourse on Structure of Standardization**

The emergence of standardization outside the traditional formal system raises issues about how to describe it, or even refer to it. The terminology, Standards Development Organization (SDO) vs. Standards Related Organization (SRO), as has been noted earlier, comes from the SDO world, whose members generally draw a sharp distinction between standards and specifications—standards being those documents that the SDOs create and that enjoy the legitimacy of creation by duly accredited bodies. Members of SDOs regard specifications as normative documents that do not meet the rigorous requirements of formal standards. Many members of the non-SDO world also regard themselves as standards developers, but they do not generally draw such a strict distinction.\(^1\) It is difficult to find terminology both worlds accept. One problem is the vagueness of the term specifications. It is too general to convey the normative purpose of a document. Additionally, there is no consensus regarding the scope of the term, standards.

Another way of distinguishing these SDO and SRO perspectives, coming from economic discourse about standardization, is *market-based vs. negotiated selection*
Standardization and Competing Consortia: The Trade-Off Between Speed and Compatibility
Marc van Wegberg (2004). *International Journal of IT Standards and Standardization Research* (pp. 18-33).
[www.igi-global.com/article/standardization-competing-consortia/2557?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/standardization-competing-consortia/2557?camid=4v1a)

Beyond the “Point of No Return”: Constructing Irreversibility in Decision Making on the Tetra Standard in Dutch Emergency Communication
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/beyond-point-return/70698?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/beyond-point-return/70698?camid=4v1a)