

REPORTING DAILY FROM THE 2015 INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM dw.giplatform.org/igf

ZERO RATING DOMINATES IGF 2015

It often happens at the IGF that an issue emerges as the "hot topic" of the week. A couple of years ago, in Bali, it was online surveillance. This year, it's zero rating.

Zero rating is the practice of not charging customers for specific applications or services they use. The most famous example is Facebook's internet.org, now rebranded 'Free Basics'. The Free Basics service provides free access to content and applications to populations in a selection of developing countries, with the aim of providing some level of Internet service to people who otherwise would have no service.

However, for critics of zero rating, this 'walled garden' approach is a violation of network neutrality principles, and in some cases, law. The debate at the IGF this week has been complex. Different understandings and interpretations of net neutrality and zero rating have added to the difficulty of perhaps reaching a more nuanced understanding of which zero rating version may be (un)acceptable in the context of which version of network neutrality.

While zero rating in developed markets may have stronger implications about competition and unfettered access to information, in an undeveloped market, where there is otherwise very limited or no access to the Internet, does the provision of some services through zero rating actually empower, not disempower, the users?



Photo by Samantha Dickinson

Some have asked whether the angst of the mostly middle class participants at the IGF, who are already connected to the Net, is overly paternalistic in trying to stop service providers from offering zero rated services to people who otherwise have no access to the Internet at all? Is this a new cyber' imperialism we are witnessing, with the well-resourced telling the non-resourced that it's better for them to remain non-resourced until they have full resources rather than partial resources? Is zero rating better considered, as its supporters have argued this week, as one of many access options available that can help bring the next billion fully online? Or does zero rating create an underclass of users of a half-Net?

Some of the IGF participants from the least developed countries of the world have said they prefer some access over no access. Facebook has said that users of its Free Basics services generally move to paid subscriptions within a month of starting Free Basics. But according to Helani Gilpaya of LIRNEasia, there is very little research into how much zero rating helps move people into a framework of subscriber-based open Internet access.

As with the two previous IGF hot topics, online surveillance and human rights, it may be that this IGF is the initial brainstorming phase of zero rating discussion, with all parties passionately telling each other what they think without listening quite as intensely to other viewpoints. As with online surveillance and human rights, perhaps IGF 2016 will see a more focused and matured discussion on zero rating – possibly as part of the wider discussion on how to bring access to all.

PREFIX MONITOR

Compared to Days 1 and 2, the trade-off between cyber and online on one hand, and digital and net on the other hand, continues. A sharp decrease in the use of digital on Day 3 in comparison with Day 2, as well as a similar decrease in the use of net on Day 2 when compared to Day 1, have now completely reversed the initial Prefix Monitor (Day 1 was dominated by net and digital).

This analysis is based on 14 available transcripts from Day 3 of IGF 2015. Prefix Monitor follows the use of prefixes and identifies trends in discourse shaping, session by session, at the end of each day. Percents represent the relative presence of a particular prefix among all characteristically prefixed IG terms used. The Prefix Monitor is powered by Diplo's CreativeLab text-mining DTAF platform. 🖸



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Photo by Samantha Dickinson

SESSIONS FOR DYNAMIC COALITIONS

The Main Session on Dynamic Coalitions 🖸 (Part I) was an innovation at this year's IGF. The pilot project was aimed at facilitating a process among bottom-up organisations to work together, discuss and reach an outcome.

In the first of two sessions, several Dynamic Coalitions presented their work to the larger IGF community for feedback. Part II will take place on Day 4 of the IGF.

ANONYMITY AND ENCRYPTION

While greater protection for encryption and anonymity online is required, encryption needs to be viewed as more closely related to security, rather than a purely economic issue. During the workshop on Encryption and Anonymity: Rights and Risks 🗹 (WS 155), panellists discussed the pros and cons of legislation on encryption, and considered the implications of two jurisdictional cases on anonymity and encryption. Although anonymity is important for the free flow of ideas, the principle is not absolute and needs to be balanced with other aspects.

TACKLING THE NEEDS OF SIDS

Small island developing states share unique characteristics and circumstances. Generally, SIDS have small economies, and require innovative solutions for remoteness and environmental challenges. Many suggestions emerged from the SIDS Roundtable [2] (WS 21), including the need to reduce costs for underserved areas, to rethink the concept of zero rating services and their impact on small markets, to encourage local content, and to expand on stakeholder involvement, especially non-technical players such as civil society and academia.

MANAGING DIGITAL LEGACIES

What happens to our online accounts and personal data after we die? Who will manage our digital legacies? The workshop on Death and the Internet 🖸 (WS 70) looked at the issue of digital legacies... with a touch of humour. In a hypothetical set-up, panellists played the role of an online user who died testate but without a valid power of attorney. His family is suing for the right to access his data, while legal experts apply different laws to the scenario. Although future planning is a topic many avoid, the amount of personal data we leave behind merits an in-depth discussion about privacy, personal data, conflicting policies and regulations, jurisdiction, and the role of policy-makers.

ONLINE PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLES

The process of developing e-participation principles as a substantial part of the IGF meetings started at the IGF in Nairobi, in 2011. Today, the E-Participation Principles Final Draft C was released for feedback during the workshop on Viable application & debate: online participation principles C (WS 27).

Since 2011, we have also witnessed a rapid integration of e-participation into many IG meetings. However, adequate funding could help further strengthen e-participation, especially at IGF meetings.





INTERVIEW WITH KATHY BROWN PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE INTERNET SOCIETY

1) As we've reached the 10th anniversary of the IGF, what are your thoughts on the IGF's evolution?

For the global Internet community, the IGF has become the vehicle to harness the benefits of our diversity and to identify issues and solutions through a collaborative approach, on an equal footing and in an inclusive, open environment. The evolution of national and regional IGF initiatives, strengthening a bottom-up approach to global issues through roots in our local communities, has highlighted the multistakeholder model as the best path forward to address Internet issues at both local and global levels.

We've also seen important steps at the IGF to evolve towards more tangible outcomes. The Best Practice Forums are great examples of efforts to build on our collective knowledge, experiences and perspectives, and to share concrete solutions to complex problems.

2) What do you see as the greatest challenges for the Internet and its future?

The Internet has come a long way since its nascent days and certainly over the past 10 years. While there are more than 3 billion people online today, more than half of the world's population remains unconnected from what is the 'central nervous system' of the global economy. There is much work to do, and connecting the unconnected is one of the key imperatives for the Internet and for society. We need to continue to build a better, stronger Internet and make it available to more people around the world. At the same time, we must work to promote

3) How can the Internet community here at the IGF have the greatest impact on these challenges?

and build trust in the Internet to safeguard its future and bring value to those that use it today and in the future.

Collaboration and coordination are essential. All stakeholders share a responsibility to work together to develop policies, services, tools and applications that will bring the benefits of Internet access to all, and to move toward achieving greater trust in the Internet.

The Internet is the fundamental tool for empowerment in the 21st century and will be the primary catalyst in bringing about positive change through the creation of social and economic opportunity. In fact, the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently adopted by the United Nations recognize the Internet as an enabler for economic and social progress, and as a tool for the implementation of these universally agreed new goals. The global Internet community must act now to unlock the full potential of the Internet for the future and to affirm once again that the Internet is for everyone, everywhere.

4) What is the Internet Society's primary focus this week at the IGF?

We are all here to celebrate the 10 years of transformative change brought about by our collective efforts to build an Internet from the bottom up for the benefit of our human society. We come also to embrace the opportunities and challenges of the future. As this year's IGF is focused on empowering Sustainable Development and Connecting the Next Billions, these priorities must be utmost in our minds. Particularly with the upcoming December 10-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), it is essential to illustrate how inclusive governance is the vehicle for the ultimate shared objective of connecting the unconnected to a trusted Internet that continues to be a platform for human, social and economic development and for improving the exercise of human rights.





Our team has studied 54 available IGF 2015 session transcripts in order to find out the context in which the term designating the WSIS process is found. The extent of the coloured area around a particular term in the plot is proportional to how often that term was used during Days 1 to 3 of IGE 2015. Terms closest to each other on this map are found in similar contexts. The terms review, initiative, language, civil society, cybersecurity, IG, and ICT are the closest semantic neighbours to WSIS. Cybersecurity stands out, and so does IPv6 to the right; both represent issues that call for specialised, elaborate discussions. WSIS was used much more frequently than the actual WSIS+10 term, which is the reason why WSIS, and not WSIS+10, was selected for this analysis.



DO NOT MISS TODAY

Human Rights on the Internet - 11:00-13:00 (Main Hall)

The ability for both State and non-State actors to use the Internet to do a sophisticated array of activities, such as monitor people's activities, restrict access to information and target minority groups, as well as the increasing time that people spend in the online world has heightened awareness of the human rights implications of a continually more sophisticated Internet environment. This roundtable will examine previously identified human rights implications of the Internet, as well as identify any other human rights issues that may also be emerging.

The NETmundial Statement and the Evolution of the Internet Governance Ecosystem – 14:00-16:00 (Main Hall)

Brazil is where the NETmundial Statement was written; Brazil is where the last IGF is being held before the 10-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society is finalized in the United Nations General Assembly. This session looks back at NETmundial's principles and roadmap and looks forward to an Internet governance ecosystem that implements those items.

Open Microphone & Taking Stock – 16:30-17:00 (Main Hall)

It may be short, but the 'anything goes' approach of Open Microphone gives people an opportunity to raise ideas and views that may not have had an airing before, and may indicate the direction of next year's IGF discussion.

THANKING THE IGF DAILY TEAM!

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Coordination: Tereza Horejsova, director project development of DiploFoundation, coordinator of the Geneva Internet Platform







