The political economy of the Internet Governance: why is Africa absent

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Internet governance

- Governance of Internet on basis of safeguarding critical resources (root, domain names) to safeguard vitality of Internet
- Transfer from US Department of Commerce, NTIA to ICANN, IANA
- Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions include the management of protocol parameters, Internet number resources and domain names.
- Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) performs these functions on behalf of the global Internet community.
Human rights precondition of open Internet

- ‘Epistemic communities’ – multilateral organisations, social movements NGOs, technical community coalesced
- understanding of the Internet’s openness and accessibility to the preconditions for exercising fundamental rights,
- to fulfil its political and economic potential the Internet needed to be made sustainable, robust, secure and stable.
- not relating only to the functionality of the Internet, but to be inalienable rights in the Information Society.
- ICANN committed to respect fundamental rights.
NTIA (US) requirements for transition

- NTIA has stated that the transition proposal must have broad community support and address the following four principles:
  
  - Support and enhance the multistakeholder model
  - Maintain the security, stability and resiliency of the Internet DNS
  
  - Meet the needs and expectations of the global customers and partners of the IANA services
  
  - Maintain the openness of the Internet

- NTIA also specified that it will not accept a proposal that replaces the NTIA role with a government-led or intergovernmental organization solution.
Internet Governance Forum

- bifurcated governance systems
  - technical governance issues in ICANN
  - Internet Governance Forum – a non-decision making body taking forward the non-technical agenda

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Geneva Declaration:

- inclusive Information Society required new forms of solidarity, partnership and co-operation among governments and other stakeholders, i.e. the private sector, civil society and international organisations (Article 17, Geneva Declaration)
  - Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
**Internet Governance**

- **Multilateralism**: ITU, OECD, AU
- **Sovereign nation state**
- **Authority/representation**
- **State, private sector, civil society**
- **Multistakeholderism**
- **Global governance**
- **ITU**
  - (telecommunications – infrastructure, closed, regulate, digital divide)
- **ICANN, IGF**
  - Internet – Critical resources
    - open, decentralised, innovation, beyond access
Old internet world and new internet world

- Old Internet World vs. New Internet World
  - presented as two aligned blocs – with other lagging developing countries often placed in the New Internet World camp
- interests so diverse, perhaps the only thing that unites them is their scepticism about the control of Internet governance, specifically U S.
- China and Russian
  - sovereignty of nation state
  - refusal to be bound by universal values
- India (South Africa) commitment to universal principles, support for universal values but concern multistakeholderism undermines democratic will of people
Addressing conditions of inequality

- conditions of abundance vs constraint - evolution of the Internet in the Global North and South
- arising digital inequality within and between nations
- mirrors global and national inequality and affects the ability of all categories of stakeholders in Africa to respond to the calls for collective Internet governance
- mobilisation within and between different stakeholders globally
Changing nature of the state

- Globalisation – multiple players in decision making
- Government vs. governance: goals accomplished not only by enforcing laws and regulations but also through institutional dialogue, social practices and other informal ways of organising activities in accordance with the rules
- State enabler of local development, globally promote national interest (security – trade) – civil society piggybacks / challenges this
Lack of alignment with Global North

- today states are characterised as competing economically rather than militarily, in a global economy for investment
- tensions between labour and capital and others arising from late capitalism are mediate by democratic elections and by significant public spending, made possible by continuous economic growth globalisation
- under conditions of neocolonialism and advanced capitalism lack of alignment with economic and political conditions in Africa
- Non alignment of normative framework
  - Assumes effective regulated (liberalised) competitive markets
Absence of conditions for ‘good governance’ (effective democratic state)

- Political economy of Africa countries structurally not able to comply with ‘good governance’ programmes that aid or assent require
- Political features of developing countries connected to the underdevelopment of economies.
- Lack of institutional capacities or incompatibility of institutional endowments with pre-existing distributions of power.
- Empirical incorrect to demand democracy, accountability, anti-corruption as precondition for economic growth (global governance)
- Limited productive sector, small surplus to tax, limited resources to reallocate to social democratic project
- Maintain political stability through patron client relations
Developmental state conditions absent too

- National project
- State embedded autonomy (direct limited private capital on delivery of public objectives)
- Authoritarianism and economic growth
- Meritocratic bureaucracy
Critique of multistakeholderism

- Deliberative democracy /pluralist: No mechanisms for representation, selection or accountability
- way of opening up intergovernmental institutions, but has failed to provide viable alternative
- goal rather than means to achieving Internet governance
- applied to areas of governance may that it may not be appropriate operationally or politically (DeNardis & Raymond 2013)
- addresses issues of representation and process by exploring democratic participation but does not provide guidance on the substantive policy issues evades the key axes of national sovereignty and hierarchical power
  - “At worst it offers a simple-minded communitarianism that implies that all political, economical and social conflicts can be resolve if everyone involved just sits down and talks about them together.” (2010:264)
Networked state/international agreement?

› Formal part of international agreement/foreign policy, trade or environment as part of national public policy OR

› harness private sector and civil society resources or those of better resourced states to create the conditions that would enable them to better influence Internet governance
› For more see [www.researchICTafrica.net](http://www.researchICTafrica.net)

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