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

Alison Gillwald (PhD)

Executive Director, Research ICT Africa

Adjunct Professor, Graduate School of Development Policy & Practice, University of Cape Town

Beijing Forum 2016

researchICTafrica.net

Content

‣ Importance of Internet in economic growth & development

‣ Internet Governance – institutions & functions

‣ Critical resources and strategic resources

‣ Multilateralism vs. multistakeholderism

‣ Cyberlibertarians, statists (realists), institutionalists

‣ Changing nature of state

‣ Non alignment of normative framework

  ‣ Assumes effective regulated competitive markets

  ‣ Assumes offline rights needed to be safeguarded online

‣ Political economy of Africa countries

‣ Critique of Multilateralism

‣ Network state as pathway to participation

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.
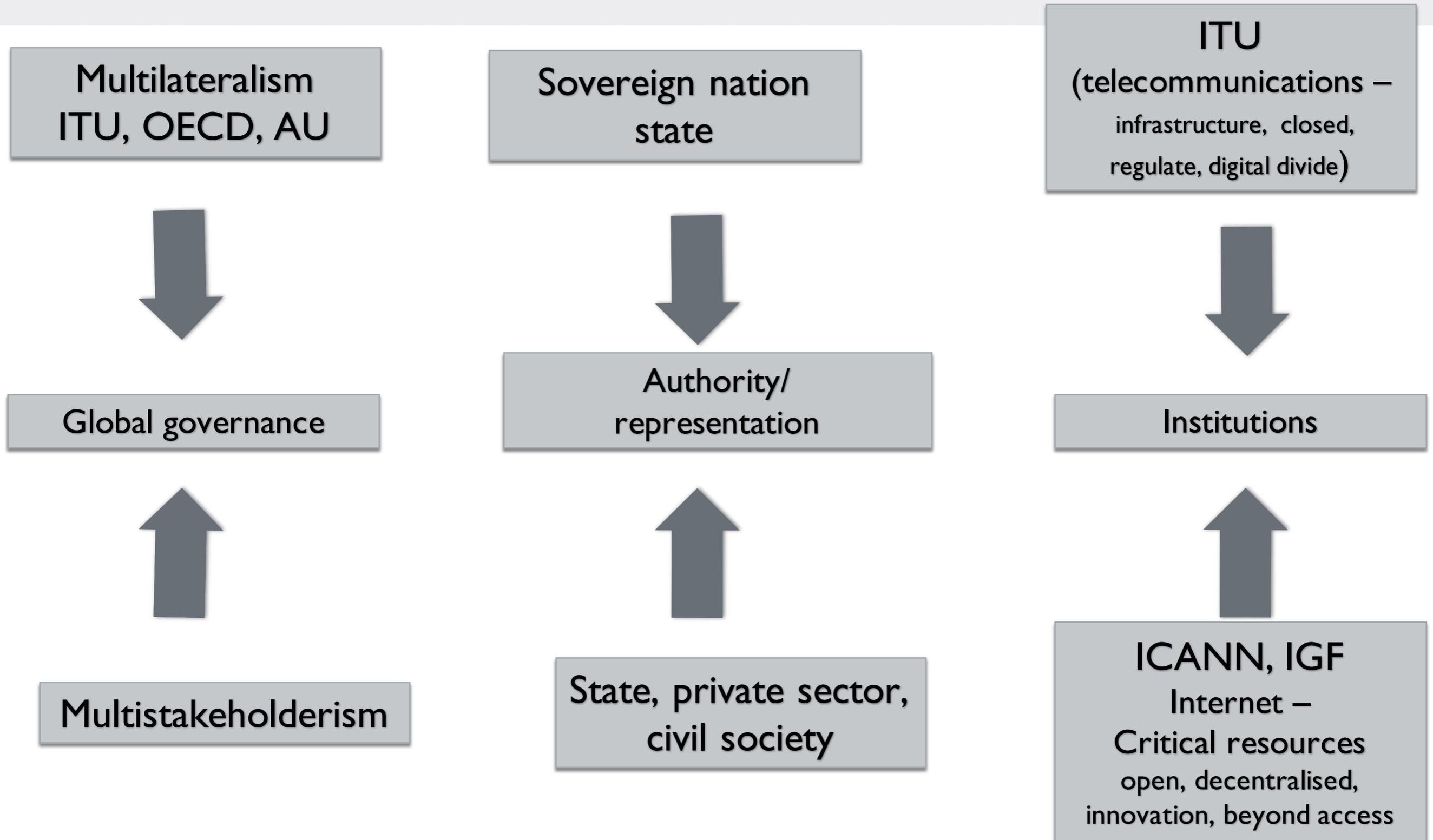
‣ ICANN committed to respect fundamental rights.

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.

researchICTafrica.net

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)

researchICTafrica.net

Internet Governance

Multilateralism
ITU, OECD, AU

Sovereign nation
state

ITU
(telecommunications –
infrastructure, closed,
regulate, digital divide)

Global governance

Authority/
representation

Institutions

Multistakeholderism

State, private sector,
civil society

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

researchICTafrica.net

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

researchICTafrica.net

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

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

researchICTafrica.net

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)

researchICTafrica.net

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

researchICTafrica.net

‣ For more see www.researchICTafrica.net

‣ This research is main possible by the Canadian International Research Development Centre (IDRC)

researchICTafrica.net