

GISWatch
10th anniversary

GLOBAL INFORMATION SOCIETY WATCH

*National and Regional Internet
Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)*



ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)

Global Information Society Watch

2017



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Financial support provided by



APC would like to thank the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for its support for Global Information Society Watch 2017.



Published by APC

2017

Printed in USA

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Global Information Society Watch 2017 web and e-book

ISBN: 978-92-95102-84-2

APC-201711-CIPP-R-EN-PDF-274

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A special edition of GISWatch, "Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words", is being published as a companion edition to the 2017 GISWatch annual report. It looks at the history, challenges and achievements of NRIs, as recounted by their organisers. It is available at <https://www.giswatch.org>

ARGENTINA

BEING PART OF THE DEBATE: THE CONSOLIDATION OF A LOCAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER SPACE FOR INTERNET GOVERNANCE IN ARGENTINA



Nodo TAU

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Introduction

This report analyses the process of building the national Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a multistakeholder space for internet governance deliberations in Argentina. It is based on several interviews with actors in the local internet environment who participated in the IGF, as well as on session reports from the event.

Argentina's first IGF was held in October 2016. All stakeholder groups in the local internet environment participated in the event – which was seen as a breakthrough in the internet governance space in the country. But the event was not without its challenges.

To what extent was the multistakeholder approach successful? Who was left out? Did the event influence the local policy-making environment? And what improvements are necessary as we work towards the future?

This report suggests that while the IGF has been successful in starting to build trust between different role players, there remains a need to reach out to more diverse stakeholders, including marginalised and grassroots groups.

Policy and political background

Argentina was first connected to the internet through universities. In 1987, a group of engineers from the Computational Department of the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires established the first national connection to the internet using the communication protocols of the Unix operating system.¹ Some of them were involved in a process of modernising the communications infrastructure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who became interested in the possibilities of internet connectivity, as rudimentary as it was at the time. The ministry also had the funds to pay for the daily international calls necessary to be

connected to the internet. While the university did not have these resources, they did have the technical capacity.

It was this ministry that later represented Argentina in the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC)² of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), as well as at the start of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process. Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government created NIC.ar (the Argentine Network Information Centre) for the registration and administration of domain names, under ICANN. NIC.ar has taken a leading role in representing Argentina in international technical forums.

Another relevant actor in the internet governance landscape was born in the late 1980s. CABASE,³ the chamber of telecommunications service providers, was created in 1989. It is still a key player and also co-founder of other important institutions in the region.

Argentina's international participation in internet governance became visible during the WSIS process, with an agenda "focused on the deployment and adoption of new technologies [to address] poverty and the socioeconomic gap, rather than on the political aspects of the international governance regime," explains Carolina Aguerre in a recent paper.⁴ "More recently, a change in policies was seen in relation to goods and services when the state started to intervene not only through regulation but also as a provider of services,"⁵ she says, in relation to programmes such as Argentina Conectada, which provides infrastructure for connectivity, and the development of the national satellite, ARSAT.

Another milestone in the roadmap of internet governance was Argentina's participation in the Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance (NETmundial)⁶ in Brazil in 2014. During the meeting, the government launched the

1 Novick, F. (2014, 18 May). Un cuartito con vista al mundo. *Página/12*. www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/radar/9-9733-2014-05-19.html

2 <https://gac.icann.org>

3 www.cabase.org.ar/primeros-en-america

4 Aguerre, C. (2017). Redes de gobernanza de internet a nivel nacional. La experiencia de casos recientes en América Latina. In Del Campo, A. (Ed.), *Hacia una Internet libre de censura II. Perspectivas en América Latina*. www.palermo.edu/cele/pdf/investigaciones/Hacia_una_internet_libre_de_censura_II.pdf

5 *Ibid.*

6 netmundial.br

Argentine Commission of Internet Policies (CAPI),⁷ which was created to “elaborate a national strategy for the internet and its governance.” The initiative was celebrated, as was the geopolitical decision to launch it during NETmundial. However, it did not last very long.⁸

In December 2015, a new government, led by Mauricio Macri, assumed office. As soon as it did, it shuffled the institutional structure and created two new ministries closely related to information and communications technology (ICT) policies: the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Modernisation. A year and a half after its creation, the Ministry of Communications was dissolved in a rather controversial way. During its existence it was involved in the derogation of the Law for Audio-visual Services,⁹ known as the “media law”, in the process of the privatisation of ARSAT, and in the development of controversial regulatory measures that allowed businesses to become more concentrated in terms of ownership.¹⁰

For the past two years, issues related to internet governance have fallen under the Ministry of Modernisation, which includes several directorates that have addressed internet issues.¹¹ The Directorate of Internet Policies and Development was created to “promote multistakeholder dialogue and exchange experiences with other actors and countries with the aim to design and apply internet policies in the country.” In August 2016, the directorate launched a Multistakeholder Working Group on the Internet.¹² Other entities involved in internet policy are the Directorate of Digital Government, the “Digital Country” Secretariat, the Committee for Cybersecurity and the Secretariat of Information and Communications Technologies.

Several participants in the internet environment in Argentina say that the government has a visible role in internet governance, and shows a high level of participation in multistakeholder forums. This was the case in the 2016 Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Internet

Governance Forum (LACIGF) held in Costa Rica, where Argentina had a significant presence.¹³

In the academic sector, the growing relevance of internet governance can be seen, although it still remains rare in the formal academic curricula. Two private universities have visibility in spheres of internet governance: the University of San Andrés, through its Centre of Studies for Technology and Society (CETyS),¹⁴ which hosts the national IGF secretariat and has very recently launched a Diploma on Internet Governance,¹⁵ and the University of Palermo and its Centre for Studies of Freedom of Expression (CELE), which has organised a series of workshops for organisations in Latin America to discuss regulations, rights and debates related to the internet.¹⁶ The public universities of Buenos Aires, San Martín, La Plata and Córdoba also offer courses on the subject.

In the civil society sphere, there are organisations that lead advocacy work on internet rights which have succeeded in making their voices heard. Fundación Via Libre¹⁷ and the Association for Civil Rights (ADC)¹⁸ are the most visible, but there are others focused on the technical aspects of internet governance or with a community base that also raise awareness and hold debates. There are two policies that have consistently attracted the attention of civil society: first, the law that regulates intermediary liability,¹⁹ and second, the very extended debate – still on the agenda – about the implementation of electronic voting.²⁰

Coming together at home: Achieving a local multistakeholder space

Argentina has consistent representation from all stakeholders in most internet governance and policy debates.²¹ Because of this, different stakeholders have shared spaces and engaged in debates for a long time. Given this high level of engagement, we need to ask: Why did stakeholders feel it necessary to develop a national IGF?

The LACIGF was created at the very beginning of the IGF process. The first meeting was held in 2008

7 Zuazo, N. (2014, 16 May). El Plan del gobierno para regular Internet. *Ambito.com*. www.ambito.com/741056-el-plan-del-gobierno-para-regular-internet

8 Aguerre, C. (2017). Op. cit.

9 servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/155000-159999/158649/norma.htm

10 Abrevaya, S. (2017, 12 July). Ahora al cuartel con la satisfacción del deber cumplido. *Página12*. www.pagina12.com.ar/49589-ahora-al-cuartel-con-la-satisfaccion-del-deber-cumplido

11 mapadeestado.modernizacion.gob.ar/organigramas/modernizacion.pdf

12 Portal Argentina (2016, 29 August). Se presentó el Grupo de Trabajo Multisectorial sobre Internet. www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/se_presento_el_grupo_de_trabajo_multisectorial_sobre_internet

13 Roveri, F. (2016, 11 August). El foro sobre internet se reunió en Costa Rica. *enREDando*. www.enredando.org.ar/2016/08/11/el-foro-sobre-internet-se-reunio-en-costa-rica

14 cetysedu.org

15 Diplomatura en Gobernanza de Internet. cetysedu.org/digi

16 www.palermo.edu/cele

17 <https://www.vialibre.org.ar>

18 <https://adcdigital.org.ar>

19 Ferrari, V., & Schnidrig, D. (2015). *Responsabilidad de Intermediario y Derecho al Olvido. Contribuciones a la Discusión Legislativa en Argentina*. www.palermo.edu/cele/pdf/Policy_Paper_Derecho_al_Olvido.pdf

20 <https://www.vialibre.org.ar/category/activismo/voto-electronico>

21 Slotnisky, D. (2015, 6 August). ¿Quién gobierna Internet? *La Nación*. www.lanacion.com.ar/1816509-quien-gobierna-internet

in Montevideo and many Argentines were involved in its organisation from then onwards. After the 2015 event held in Mexico, the Argentine community focused on the possibility of organising a local multistakeholder space. People interviewed for this report felt that the LACIGF is one of the keystones that stimulated the local event.

After returning from Mexico, a group of participants called for a meeting to define an agenda and to start to develop a methodology for a national meeting. On 27 October 2015, the first Dialogue on Internet Governance took place at the University of San Andrés, and involved the face-to-face participation of 40 people and the remote participation of 30. “We chose the dialogue format, inspired by the Mexican experience,”²² said Aguerre, who is a researcher at CETyS and was very involved in the development of the process.

The aim of the dialogue was “to promote a space of debate that helps to shape the use and development of the internet in our country,” with a clear view of the global IGF that was to take place in Joao Pessoa at the end of 2015.²³ The issues addressed in the dialogue were defined in the first meeting and later refined in an open online consultation. They pointed to four areas of discussion: infrastructure and access; internet and rights; cybersecurity and surveillance; and the future of internet governance in the country.²⁴ It was the first instance of open, peer-to-peer conversation in line with the core principles of the IGF.

The dialogue also received economic support from private companies such as Google, Facebook and Fibertel, among others. The funds were mainly used for scholarships for the participation of people from other provinces of the country.

The following year, on 19 July 2016, a meeting took place involving stakeholders that had participated in the first dialogue, in order to define the continuity of the space, and a common agenda for the LACIGF that was to take place in Costa Rica at the end of July 2016.²⁵ During this meeting it was noted that the dialogue format needed to be opened up, and the decision was made to organise the first national IGF in Argentina. One strong point that motivated the local IGF was the importance of

the institutionalisation of governance in the national sphere. This shows that there was an advocacy agenda in the drive behind holding the country’s first IGF.

Reports from this meeting reveal that the exchanges between stakeholders were fluid and intense, and anticipated the discussions at the national IGF. Participants also discussed the formalities of the future national event and created a secretariat and an organising committee, in which each stakeholder would be represented by two members. The ruling principles of the IGF were also defined. They include transparency, openness, multistakeholderism, equality in the participation of each stakeholder and rotating committee members. The committee started to work right after its members returned from Costa Rica.

The first national IGF in Argentina was held on 24 and 25 October 2016 in Buenos Aires, with approximately 200 people participating in person, and another 100 remotely. Most of the funds collected from sponsors (80%) were allocated to 30 scholarships.

The first day was dedicated to understanding issues, capacity building sessions that addressed the state of the internet governance situation in Argentina, the principles and architecture of the country’s internet, a review of institutions of governance, society and rights, private sector initiatives currently in development, and regulations, among others. The second day was organised into sessions and three roundtables that created much more debate than the previous day’s sessions. The sessions addressed the digital economy in Argentina, human rights, freedom of expression and privacy, cybersecurity, inclusion and access, and multistakeholder governance. The roundtables were dedicated to critical infrastructures and concentration of ownership, personal data protection, and content removal and cybercrimes.

Evaluating the experience

To analyse the impact of the national IGF, we have gathered the perspectives of several participants from civil society, the technical community, academia and the government: Javier Pallero (Access Now),²⁶ Carolina Aguerre (CETyS), Bernadette Califano (University of Buenos Aires), Elena Ramirez (NIC.ar) and Nicolás Echaniz (AlterMundi).²⁷ We have also included some points that were highlighted in the closing session of the event.

22 Diálogos sobre Gobernanza de Internet en México. www.gobernanzadeinternet.mx

23 Foro de Gobernanza de Internet en Argentina. (2015). Reporte del Diálogo sobre la Gobernanza de Internet en Argentina 2015. igfargentina.org/20151027.php

24 Ibid.

25 Foro de Gobernanza de Internet en Argentina. (2016) Pre FGI Argentina. Reunión de Definición de Agenda. igfargentina.org/assets/docs/igfargentina-20160719-agenda.pdf

26 <https://www.accessnow.org>

27 <https://www.altermundi.net>

Aguerre highlighted the importance of the process of formalising a national IGF. She underlined the increase in participation by the government, which she said showed a strong interest in a multistakeholder way of working. When asked about impact of the IGF on government actions, she said that no concrete policies or regulations were directly influenced by the Argentina IGF. However, she emphasised that the IGF clearly had an impact on the government's network of contacts – seen in the participation of stakeholders at government presentations, or the government stakeholder consultations that arose from the event. She also mentioned that people appreciated the possibility of close interaction with government functionaries, “because they were there and they had to answer questions.”

However, she said there was a gap in attention given to the needs of the academic community. “We feel that there was a gap in relation to this issue. There are professionals, researchers or advanced students that need to study in this field but curricula do not reflect this yet.” There nevertheless is interest and initiatives are starting to emerge, including diplomas and post-graduate studies being offered. It was difficult to measure the levels of participation of academia due to the fact that in Argentina, few people live off their academic work – so they often declare other roles as their primary work when asked, or say they are academics when most of their work is done in other sectors.

Aguerre is critical of civil society participation: “They are absorbed by their own projects and more focused on international events.” She says that although “working for governance implies the construction of spaces,” there are some organisations that work consistently on issues, but do not participate in the construction of local spaces. She felt that the private sector was very committed to the process. “They are interested in its development because they appreciate this opportunity of contact with other stakeholders and the sharing of knowledge of how the internet works.” However, she added that the private sector should be analysed in more detail, because it involves a wide variety of actors.

Aguerre mentioned the lack of continuity following the IGF. “An event only for the sake of the event is not enough. It should acquire an intersessional dynamic of work that commits all sectors, because the sustainability of the space depends on that,” she stressed. “We should have a clearer vision about the general interest in the space and the public's interest. This may help the community to value it. If we arrive at the conclusion that nothing changes if the space does not exist, we will be doing

useless work.” She believes, however, that if the national IGF did not exist, there would be a weakening of the space for multistakeholder discussion and the visibility of internet governance issues.

Javier Pallero, from Access Now, an organisation representing civil society in the IGF's organising committee, gave a positive evaluation of both the quantity and quality of participation. “The debate was deep in the treatment of issues; although, considering the situation of people not being very deeply involved in internet governance, it was kept at a mid-level to involve all voices.” He defined government involvement as being in line with previous years: “Although it assisted in relevant areas, its commitment was not much more than in previous years [i.e. at the Dialogues].” However, he says NIC.ar was an exception in this regard.

While Pallero felt that civil society participation was good, he said it needed to be improved. “Argentine civil society working with digital rights is very active, but it lacks communication with the sector. It would be necessary to achieve better spaces of participation, even more so in a context in which government is not listening to us.” For Pallero, the coordination of actions is a challenge. “Although we have different agendas, we search for common goals, which are the realisation of rights and legal protection, and we all do advocacy to push our agendas in the public sphere.” He also mentioned that it was a challenge “to overcome the intransigence of some groups that hinder the agreements.”

Bernardette Califano, a researcher and university professor, defined the IGF as “an opportunity to enlighten society in debates related to internet governance, but more specifically in the mechanisms and regulations to do with the internet that people do not question when using it every day.” However, she noted that the debate remained at a rather abstract level, which was difficult to understand for non-specialists. She felt that this is especially due to the fact that although the forum is attended by different stakeholders, they are “always the same people.”

Califano suggested that this resulted in a uniform perspective emerging, with some cases of stakeholders from one sector, such as civil society, now representing a different stakeholder, such as a multinational intermediary. “This made it difficult to appreciate the different positions or discussions in each session. While discussing these issues, we were not exposed to a fruitful multistakeholder debate, since in many cases a common perspective prevails among the actors involved.” She also highlighted that academic participants are mostly from technical or legal sectors, with not so many from the

social sciences, such as political science, sociology or communications. “The contributions of lawyers and engineers are crucial, but they present certain shortcomings when it comes to analysing the socio-cultural dimensions and implications involved in internet governance.”

Other civil society participants have proposed a deeper criticism of the event as it is conceived. Starting with questioning the concept of multi-stakeholderism as it is applied in the IGF, Nicolás Echaniz from AlterMundi said that “the concept of ‘multi-stakeholder’ proposes a vertical division of the sectors, and understanding that concepts of ‘governmental’, ‘academic’, ‘civil’, and ‘private’ are useful categories for settling tensions.” For Echaniz, “All these fields can be divided in a much more useful way for the emancipatory struggle, which is ‘horizontal’, distinguishing the above from the below.” “Google, the US State Department, Freedom House and University of San Andrés most probably will be alienated and represent convergent interests. At the same time, small ISP [internet service provider] cooperatives, the government of Bolivia, AlterMundi and the University of San Martín will most probably have another agenda to share.”

For AlterMundi it is a challenge to find ways of measuring how these events have an impact within excluded communities. “Are there parameters to measure the positive impact of these events on the agenda of those from ‘below’? How can we build a methodology that allows us to read this impact in order to evaluate if it makes sense for us to participate, or if we are only lending our good image to legitimise such spaces?”

Another argument raised by AlterMundi and also expressed by Fundación Vía Libre during the IGF itself is a question about the resources involved in such events. “We should measure the carbon footprint²⁸ to evaluate if these events are worthless, given that they do not promote our agendas. The expenses related to flights, hotels, food, meetings, parties are huge. The relationship between consumed resources versus concrete outcomes reveals a negative discrepancy,” argues Echaniz.

Finally, another strong argument expressed by civil society is the absence of excluded people and vulnerable communities. “They have no voice in the Argentina IGF. It is like a forum of men discussing women’s rights,” says Echaniz. “Only civil society that has a certain level of organisation gets

involved in these [internet governance] debates and participates in these spheres. Key aspects are economic and cultural resources to participate in these events and also the acknowledgement of the debates around governance by civil society generally. So it is also challenging to get stakeholders from the communities to participate, and to allocate resources exclusively to their participation,” he said.

“The most alarming absences are women, disconnected groups and indigenous communities,” he added – a challenge that was also found in the LACIGF in Costa Rica.

When asked about the outcomes of the national IGF, Gabriela Ramírez from NIC.ar highlighted the creation of a space to discuss internet governance issues from a multistakeholder perspective. As regards government involvement, she pointed to the presence of NIC.ar and the Ministry of Modernisation, although the changes in the state structure, with the elimination of the Ministry of Communications, generated changes in the actors involved.

For NIC.ar, she says, “governance has become one of our main areas of work, together with the administration of critical infrastructure and technological projects. We had decided to work together with the whole group of actors in our own projects such as Internet Recorre²⁹ and Anycast.”³⁰ As regards concrete impacts of the IGF on policy making, she only says that the IGF clearly shows that the government must participate in the forum. In her evaluation, the level of participation of the community in the IGF still has a long way to go. There is also still a lack of understanding of the issue as well as its economic, social, cultural and educational impact.

In terms of challenges, she pointed to the need to understand the model of participation, including the aim of “bottom-up” participation, and the dynamic of consensus. As specific challenges for government, she mentioned the inclusion of all actors in legislative debates. “Although they are consulted in legislative proposals such as those dealing with intermediary liability, convergence and personal data protection, these spaces are only starting to happen.” As a specific challenge for the technical community, she mentioned participation in the deployment of IPv6, and more involvement in the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)³¹ and in the sphere of cybersecurity.

28 Oghia, M. (2016, 6 October). The Internet’s Climate Quandary and the Inconvenience of Practicing What We Preach. *Circle ID*. www.circleid.com/posts/20161006_the_internets_climate_quandary_inconvenience_of_practicing

29 <https://nic.ar/nic-argentina/internet-recorre-ir>

30 <https://www.lactld.org/anycast>

31 <https://www.ietf.org>

A balance of power: Achievements and challenges

The main achievement of the national IGF was the fact that it pushed internet governance onto the public agenda and that some measure of synergy emerged between civil society, the private sector, the technical community and academia. However, with the exception of NIC.ar, the government participated but was not fully engaged in the discussions. The national IGF also allowed the opportunity to listen to stakeholders, and to understand their perspectives on essential and specific issues, such as the relation between state and market, the conception of access, cost effectiveness and rights.

Widening the scope of the IGF – both in terms of content and participants – was mentioned as a challenge. There was a need to increase the participation of stakeholders outside of Buenos Aires province in the event and to address gender issues and balance in the panels. There was no participation of any gender movement in the IGF and gender was not even mentioned as an issue. Similarly, it was necessary to attract other groups such as programmers and free software communities from the technical community, members from the legislature and judiciary (on issues like cybersecurity and the blocking of sites), and disconnected groups or communities such as indigenous communities. It was also mentioned that it was important to include user organisations to represent users' interests. Users should be aware of internet governance debates that impact on the openness or limitations of the internet access they enjoy.³²

The balance of power was an issue in itself during the IGF in relation to the involvement of the government and the strength of civil society, particularly with regard to discussing public policies. Enrique Chaparro from Fundación Vía Libre mentioned that the consultation mechanisms that the government applies are used to legitimise their decisions, rather than showing a commitment to real participation. However, Julián Dunayevich from NIC.ar mentioned that sectors such as the technical community cannot be sidestepped when thinking about public policies. Unlike governments, they have continuity over time.

The next Argentina IGF³³ will be held in November 2017. At the beginning of 2017 a call for new representatives in the organising committee was launched. Challenges such as creating a more formal structure for the second event are also receiving attention.

Regional reflection

When asking about the origins of the national IGF, the answer is recurrent: the LACIGF. National stakeholders get together at the different regional events, as well as at the global IGF, even before they start to interact locally. In the case of Argentina, Mexico's regional IGF in 2015 was a defining event.

At the same time, when defining the necessity of a national IGF, it was argued that it is important to improve Argentina's participation in the global IGFs. The first meeting in Argentina drew on the regional IGF with the intention to create coordinated positions representing the local internet community that could be taken to the global IGF.

Local actors feel that the global IGF is rigid and very structured. But most stakeholders agree that the national IGF has helped in strengthening participation in the global IGF, as seen in the global meeting held in Mexico at the end of 2016, which took place soon after the local event. Ramírez said that "Argentina was shown as an integrated group." All participants highlighted the value of having the opportunity to share their experiences during the session on National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs),³⁴ where they were represented by the National Directorate of Internet Policies and Development.

For Aguerre, the national IGF legitimises actors that are working in the different areas. "We could participate in the NRIs session in Mexico because we organised the national event. If not, we would have had no access to those five minutes of microphone time we had in the global IGF, nor the visibility involved in such participation. In this way we were better able to make our issues heard." Aguerre also underlined that "the absence of people from Latin America is very visible" in global IGF events – "not only individuals, but also organisations," she said.³⁵

The case of the regional event is different. The LACIGF has particular mechanisms with a strong representation from civil society, even including the participation of local stakeholders from Argentina in its organisation. In the Argentine case, however, this participation is not locally coordinated. Some participants even observed that local organisations are more committed to the regional edition than to the national one, due to their previous participation. This means that a coherent local perspective is hard to develop for the regional event.

The 2017 LACIGF in Panama was important for Argentina. Pallero mentioned that Argentine

32 Slotnisky, D. (2015, 6 August). Op. cit.

33 igfargentina.org

34 <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2016-day-2-main-hall-national-and-regional-igfs>

35 [igfargentina.org/assets/doccs/igfargentina-20160719-agenda.pdf](https://www.intgovforum.org/assets/doccs/igfargentina-20160719-agenda.pdf)

stakeholders had strong participation. He regrets, however, that there was no opportunity to share the national experience. He said this may be related to the fact that the national IGF was not able to produce a document summarising the topics discussed, the perspectives shared and conclusions reached. “This input could serve to bring the ‘national’ positions to the LACIGF, always taking into account that we cannot make ‘official’ statements because that is beyond the scope of dialogue spaces like the IGF.”

Conclusions

Argentina has experienced a flourishing of spaces in which internet-related issues are discussed. However, the governance of these spaces is always a challenge. The local IGF has raised similar debates found in other areas in relation to levels of participation, to the outcomes of these events, and to the true representation of stakeholders. At the same time, the national IGF is valued as a space in which technologies, policies and regulations can be discussed at the same time, involving all the perspectives; it is a common sphere in which everyone can ask a question and all must answer.

The assessment of the participation of different stakeholders varies. The technical community is seen as particularly committed to the construction of the internet governance space. In this sense, it was felt that the difficulties that arose from a sense of discontinuity in discussion, in delays in decision making or in getting projects off the ground, could be solved by giving the technical community more influence. The challenge is to define mechanisms that guarantee continuity, no matter the changes of governments.

The national IGF was a firm step forward in this sense. However, the space also convened an established group of people that have become experts in the issues they follow. This has the potential to narrow the internet governance conversation, and to produce uniformity in perspectives. This fact, together with the critique of sector-based

multistakeholderism as a questionable concept in terms of practical value, are the more controversial aspects of this analysis. One thing that the Argentina IGF achieved was the start of building trust between the actors, derived from a shared view of the issues and challenges. Although each stakeholder group still has a vision of its own, this only enriched the debate. A collective debate allows us to understand what the others want and to see how to generate synergy between the parties. However, the participation of all people affected by the issues needs to be achieved.

In parallel, each country has different realities, different needs, unequal levels of development. Understanding where the internet is going – being part of the debate – allows everyone to think about the local situation and to think about how we can work together.

Action steps

The following action steps can be suggested for Argentina:

- It is important to make local actors from civil society more visible, to understand the issues they face, their agendas and expertise, in order to include more diverse perspectives from civil society organisations in the national IGF. For instance, this could involve organising meetings for civil society stakeholders to discuss and assess the importance of the Argentina IGF for local advocacy agendas. At the same time, it is necessary to define strategies to improve the inclusion of local civil society agendas in the global IGF.
- There is a need to continue to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of current and future IGFs with other stakeholders (government, academia, the private sector and the technical community).
- The content and outcomes of the national IGF should be shared in an accessible manner with our local communities.

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) are now widely recognised as a vital element of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) process. In fact, they are seen to be the key to the sustainability and ongoing evolution of collaborative, inclusive and multistakeholder approaches to internet policy development and implementation.

A total of 54 reports on NRIs are gathered in this year's Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch). These include 40 country reports from contexts as diverse as the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea and Colombia.

The country reports are rich in approach and style and highlight several challenges faced by activists organising and participating in national IGFs, including broadening stakeholder participation, capacity building, the unsettled role of governments, and impact.

Seven regional reports analyse the impact of regional IGFs, their evolution and challenges, and the risks they still need to take to shift governance to the next level, while seven thematic reports offer critical perspectives on NRIs as well as mapping initiatives globally.

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