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A special edition of GISWatch, "Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words", is being published
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of NRIs, as recounted by their organisers. It is available at https://www.giswatch.org

PERU

NEW GUYS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE PERUVIAN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM 2016/2017

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Introduction

Although the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) model is more than a decade old, its implementation is recent in the Peruvian digital ecosystem. This is mainly due to the small number of local actors, and the fact that there are few spaces for dialogue among them. It is partly because of this that a national IGF in Peru is a historic event.

This report offers an insider's account of setting up the national IGF in Peru – with the first event held in 2016, and the second in 2017. In particular, it looks at the challenges arising from the implementation of the core principles of the IGF model: openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and a bottom-up and non-profit approach. It considers internal dynamics in organising the events, challenges in bringing together a multistakeholder community, logistical issues such as funding, as well as challenges in selecting panellists and deciding on content issues.

This analysis may be interesting for those who want insight into the experience of setting up a national IGF in a country with a small digital ecosystem that is also unfamiliar with the IGF model.

Policy and political background

Peru is a democratic presidential republic that is governed through the classic division of powers: executive, legislative and judicial. Since 1980 we have had uninterrupted democratic elections and since 1990 economic growth has always been positive. Currently the country has a population of approximately 31 million people, a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 6,045.65, and an economy dependent on the export of unprocessed materials.

Like other countries in the region, the management model inside the government is mixed, with some entities that have strongly hierarchical and bureaucratic structures, and others that partially or totally follow the New Public Management paradigm. In the case of the internet, there are multiple offices dealing with its regulation, depending on the office's hierarchical rank in government, or the internet layer over which it exercises some kind of influence (e.g. infrastructure, copyright, data protection, etc.).

In general, the process of formulating public policies relating to the internet is transparent, but in most cases it is not participatory, and when it is, it does not conform to a multistakeholder approach. Several entities with different levels of openness and transparency coexist in the government, such as the Digital Government Secretariat and the Ministry of Transport and Communications, which are relatively open compared to the Ministry of Interior and the Army, which are involved in the formulation of cybersecurity policy.

The small size of the digital ecosystem in Peru and the historic absence of interest groups other than telecommunication companies have generated an imbalance of power in the formulation of policy and regulation. In particular, civil society is underrepresented. This is mainly because the spaces for public participation are scarce, they are discredited, or they have been captured by actors who do not have legitimacy. In addition, traditional human rights organisations have shown no interest in the impact of the internet on society and generally perceive it as simply a communications tool.

Inside the Peruvian IGF 2017: New actors, dynamics and challenges

Background

In the second half of 2015, the non-profit organisation Hiperderecho organised three meetings in Lima to promote the importance of discussing public internet policies. In each of them, representatives from the national IGFs of Argentina, Brazil and Mexico were invited to share their experiences with the attendees. At the end of the last session, it was concluded that the time was right to organise an IGF in Peru, and an open call to participate in the organising process was held with a deadline of January 2016.[1]

After many prospective meetings, the organising committee of the Peruvian IGF was set up, composed of seven representatives from different sectors: Congress (government), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (government), the Pontificia Universidad Católica del

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1　Hiperderecho (2015, 20 November). La experiencia mexicana de gobernanza de Internet. https://goo.gl/4SNEAD

Perú[2] (academia), Entel[3] (private sector), the Peruvian Software Association[4] (private sector), ONGAWA[5] (civil society) and Hiperderecho (civil society). Hiperderecho was placed in charge of the secretariat without opposition from the other members. In general, coordination and decision making were done via the internet or through one-on-one meetings.

The first Peruvian IGF was held on 21 April 2016. Although humble, it was a historic occasion. It had four thematic panels, 21 invited speakers and a total attendance of 40 people. The initiative was recognised by the secretariat of the global IGF and listed among the IGF National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs).[6] This not only gave international exposure to the event but also certified that it complied formally with the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and a bottom-up and non-profit approach.[7]

Call for expressions of interest

Although the 2016 Peruvian IGF marked an important milestone, the impact on the local ecosystem was less than expected. Two weeks earlier, general elections had been held to elect the new president and to renew the Congress for the 2016-2021 term. This meant that any discussion on internet governance was overshadowed by the political context. In addition, at the end of the event, the members of the organising committee did not keep up communications; some left their positions at their institutions and there were no further meetings.

Seeking to revitalise the interest of the community, in February 2017 Hiperderecho held a public meeting to share the final report of the IGF. During this meeting, the participants discussed several issues related to participation, the choice of panellists, and the representativeness of the actors involved in the event. The attendees also decided to start a working group to organise a new edition of the forum, building upon the experience of the previous one. At the end of the session, it was proposed that the Peruvian chapter of the Internet Society (ISOC)[8] replace Hiperderecho in its role as coordinator of the group.

The new leading organisation dedicated its first efforts to seeking the support of new actors to form the organising committee for 2017. In addition to the stakeholders who attended the event in February,

the interest of other organisations from different sectors was achieved. Finally, in April of 2017, the new organising committee was formed by Red Científica Peruana[9] (technical community), DN Consultores[10] (private sector), Democracia y Desarrollo Internacional[11] (civil society), Hiperderecho (civil society) and ISOC Peru (civil society). The latter was placed in charge of secretariat duties without opposition from the other members. In the case of the government, due to changes in personnel, the committee was unable to secure the participation of any government entity.

Work dynamics

Despite the fact that the composition of the organising committee of both IGFs was similar in numbers, the work dynamics that emerged within each one were completely different. In the case of the IGF 2016, the committee faced two main problems: the lack of understanding of the multistakeholder approach by local actors and the lack of interest of the few who knew it. On the other hand, the biggest problem in 2017 was the distribution of tasks and the decision-making process for the event.

Unlike the previous year, the participation of the members of the organising committee in 2017 was proactive from the beginning. This was not only because of their interest in the event, but also because they wanted to achieve their own agendas. For example, the representative of ISOC Peru, who also represented Democracia y Desarrollo Internacional, expressed her desire to complement the IGF's activities with another event sponsored by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).[12] In turn, Red Científica Peruana, which was committed to participating in the ICANN event, expressed interest in supporting the IGF. Both Hiperderecho and DN Consultores were functional actors within that scheme.

The organising committee started working remotely and the first meetings were crucial to identify shortcomings in the previous process. The first finding of the new committee was that there were no clear-cut responsibilities for members. Nor were there standardised processes for certain functions, such as the selection of a venue for the event, the selection of speakers and securing funding. During the IGF 2016, the leading organisation was in charge of carrying out all the tasks, since the other members simply approved or voted against the decisions, which in practice gave it some autonomy. By contrast, for the IGF 2017, all

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2 www.pucp.edu.pe

3 www.entel.pe

4 www.apesoft.org

5 www.ongawa.org

6 For further information, see the report on the Peru IGF 2016, available at: https://goo.gl/GAjAVn

7 www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/latin-american-and-caribbean-regional-group-grulac

8 https://www.internetsociety.org

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9 www.rcp.net.pe

10 www.dnconsultores.com

11 democraciadigital.pe

12 https://www.icann.org

members were interested in decisions that favoured their agendas, and this was an important challenge to overcome in the decision-making process.

Fortunately, the tension was counteracted almost immediately by the action of another group of actors in the process: the sponsors. In 2016 the economic support for the IGF Peru was provided by Google, which again expressed its interest in supporting this initiative. But this time it played an additional role: offering technical advice on the organisation of the event. This kind of "external support" contributed to the subsequent distribution of responsibilities and it was seen as a good way to maintain good relations among the local actors. It also made it possible to add other sponsors such as Facebook, Asociacion Latinoamericana de Internet (ALAI)[13] and ICANN. Some of these organisations were also assigned some logistics functions.

With the distribution of tasks and financial problems resolved, the content of the IGF – the selection of topics, formats and panellists – was the exclusive responsibility of local actors. This meant that conflict was inevitable. In the case of selecting topics, although a public survey was conducted in 2016, this time the results were not binding and the final decision was to be taken by the committee, which approved the list of topics by simple majority. With regard to formats for presentation, there was an open discussion on whether it was appropriate to change the panel format, but ultimately this initiative did not succeed. However, there was a significant misunderstanding among members when it came to the selection of panellists.

We said at the beginning of this report that the internet ecosystem in Peru is small and, when it comes to discussions about information and communications technologies (ICTs), internet governance occupies a marginal space compared to other "hotter" topics (such as startups, e-commerce and fintech). In this sense it is not surprising that where there is discussion about internet governance there is the feeling of this involving the same people and organisations.

As was the case with other issues to do with content, the organising committee proposed panellists via email. The criteria that were taken into account were: (i) that the panellists needed to be experts on the topic; (ii) that there must be a balance among the stakeholders; and (iii) that there must be gender balance. In the first drafts of the proposals, only the first element was respected. This was partly because of the confirmation bias mentioned above, but also because of a lack of awareness among some members of the organising committee about the formalities required by the multistakeholder model. For instance, some of the proposed panels were composed only of men – a situation that needed to be changed.

After a long process that included new proposals for panellists and several face-to-face meetings, the organising committee reached consensus on the final list of panellists by the end of May. Concessions were made to reach a consensus, and some panellists were asked to commit to additional responsibilities. The selection also depended on the availability of certain panellists. Two months earlier, the date of the IGF had been scheduled for June, so time also played in favour of finding a consensus on the panellist selection.

Finally, the second Peruvian IGF was held on 6 and 7 June 2017. It had seven thematic panels, 36 invited speakers and a total attendance of 173 people, of which 105 were men and 68 women. For the first time it included international speakers and remote speaker participation. For the second consecutive year it was recognised and listed as a national IGF initiative by the Secretariat of the global IGF.[14]

Achieving the core principles

In the previous sections we have described the dynamics involved in the organisation of the 2017 IGF in Peru. Next, we will identify more precisely how the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness, and the bottom-up and non-profit approaches were satisfied.

"Openness" was understood as the possibility of any person or organisation participating in the IGF and, potentially, becoming a panellist if they met certain requirements. In that sense, no one's participation was formally restricted and registration was only a way of getting statistical information for the final report submitted to the global IGF Secretariat.

"Transparency" was understood as the duty of being accountable to the community. In this sense, efforts were focused on placing as much information as possible on the website set up for the IGF.[15] However, currently the published information is limited to the formal records of the event (images, videos, etc.), but does not include information on the budget or decision-making mechanisms within the organising committee.

"Inclusiveness" was understood as providing spaces and tools for those who face barriers in participating in the IGF. In this regard, action focused on ensuring a gender balance within the panels and streaming the event, so that it could be followed and commented on by the public, especially those who do not live in Lima.

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13 www.alai.lat/en

14 For further information, see the report on the Peru IGF 2017, available at: https://goo.gl/bEnFMm

15 www.gobernanzadeinternet.pe

The bottom-up approach was understood as the obligation to think about the organisation of the event from the perspective of the needs of the community. However, this principle was not well implemented in 2016 or in 2017 either. Firstly, it needs to be recognised that the internet community is not a coherent community, so identifying its needs is difficult. Secondly, regional examples seem to suggest that a certain level of centralism is desirable. For instance, the Latin American and the Caribbean IGFs organise surveys to decide the topics to be discussed during the meeting, but the survey results usually are not binding and the final word belongs to the organising committees. It is the same with the panellist selection and logistics.

Finally, the principle of a non-profit approach was understood as the ideal of not charging the attendees at the event or using the IGF as a commercial or promotional space for products. While the forum must be economically sustainable, it should not lose its legitimacy. So far, the sponsors have made their contributions without asking for unwarranted promotion, and have not interfered in content decisions, such as demanding that the organisers change the topics set up for discussion, or rejecting proposals for panellists.

Regional reflection

Looking at other experiences in the region, we can say that the Peruvian IGF has experienced a rapid evolution in the way it is organised. The first event in 2016 faithfully represented the way in which these initiatives typically begin: a single motivated actor takes all the responsibility and builds a model that includes other stakeholders, but they play a passive role. However, the 2017 event experienced a paradigm shift because new players and different stakeholders got involved and new work dynamics were created. These dynamics involved new ways of negotiating power.

There is currently very little connection between the Latin American and Caribbean regional IGF (LACIGF) and the Peruvian process. This is because the government of Peru has always remained indifferent to the LACIGF and therefore its impact in the country is low. However, for several years different civil society organisations have participated in the LACIGF, from which they have extracted experiences that may eventually be implemented in the mid-term in Peru. The same conclusions about Peru's participation in internet governance can be reached regarding the global IGF.

Conclusions

The 2017 Peruvian IGF represented a qualitative leap forward compared to the 2016 event. The participation of the stakeholders was strengthened, there was greater diversity among panellists and attendees,

logistics were improved, and the number of sponsors grew considerably. However, there were also some problems arising from the inexperience of stakeholders concerning the multistakeholder model, and the constraints of the local internet ecosystem (e.g. lack of interest and capacities and a high level of fragmentation inside the community).

In spite of this, compliance with the core principles of the IGF has been a central concern and in most cases a satisfactory level of adherence to these principles has been achieved. Likewise, the interpersonal and stakeholder dynamics that have emerged are not different from those that arise in other areas of coordination and governance, and are healthy if these issues do not compromise the principles. Maybe the inclusion of a third party as a coordinator, perhaps from another country, could make the work of the local organisations involved easier.

In the coming years it is expected that the number of actors involved in internet governance will increase. Therefore it is necessary for the current leaders of the Peruvian IGF work to consolidate an organisational structure that allows new stakeholders to participate in an organic way, to help develop the Peruvian digital ecosystem as we work towards the future.

Action steps

The following action steps can be suggested for Peru:

- In order to address most of the problems identified in this report, civil society actors must consolidate the IGF as a space of common interest that the society as a whole needs to preserve, based on its essential principles.

- In order to gain the interest of other actors, it is necessary to build awareness among different sectors and groups, and to develop narratives that build meaningful links between the internet and key points on the public agenda such as health, work and the fight against corruption.

- The government needs to be encouraged to participate in the IGF, both nationally, regionally and globally. In order to create a link between the Peru IGF and regional and global forums, the government should be encouraged to participate actively in these spaces. It is necessary for the government to understand the political importance of participating in the IGF, and the positive impact that the IGF can have on its work.

- The former and current organisers of the Peru IGF need to standardise some processes and make them public so that the community knows how this event is organised and it is easier for new actors to become involved in the future.

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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