The Internet economy at a crossroads: emerging technologies, new business models and regulatory practices around 'zero-rating'

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Session Format: Round Table - 90 Min

Suggested speakers:
Mr. Christopher Marsden (Sussex University, UK)
Mr. Sunil Abraham (CIS India)
Ms. Danielle Kehl (New America's Open Technology Institute)*
Mr. Pedro Ramos (lawyer, specialist on net neutrality issues, Brazil)
Ms. Flavia Lefèvre (consumer rights lawyer, board member of CGI.br)

(*) To be confirmed.

Content of the session:
This workshop will discuss multiple views around the current Internet economy, mainly focusing how emerging technologies and new business models are changing Internet dynamics, both from the users and the providers point of view. In this context, there are specific practices which gain importance as they become transversal to basically everything surrounding the Internet services, as it has been happening with zero rating practices, that change historical logic of Internet provision and management.

All those entangled aspects also impact regulation and how public authorities deal with this transforming environment, balancing free and innovative markets with consumer and end-user strong protections. The session foresees dealing with all those topics, bringing a multidimensional approach to the problem, reuniting different voices coming from academia, civil society, private and government sector. The proposed policy questions to guide this debate are: (a) how emerging technologies and new business models impact Internet Dynamics?; (b) what kind of connectivity challenges and services/contents availability gaps should we highlight to understand this scenario?; (c) what sort of regulatory challenges zero rating practices present to this evolving Internet ecosystem; in particular, how zero-rating practices by Internet service providers have evolved in recent years? The session structure envisages three rounds of policy debate with the participants and time for them to interact with the audience.

Relevance of the issue:
In the worldwide long-run Internet evolution, it is possible to identify a series of changes of social, political, economic and cultural significance. The Internet innovation-driven logic causes unforeseen impacts, impinging new dynamics, shaping business models and putting on new challenges to policy, regulation and end-user practices in general. As per connectivity topics, a practice that is more and more common and integrated within markets, is the so-called zero-rating, a generic expression that could mean a sponsored data program, a free data usage within data plans, a content-based discrimination activity, a whole well defined and limited platform to provide access to specific applications among other examples.

Those types of practices have been subject of critical analyses by civil society and academia, also involving governments and the private sector. How to cope with those multiple meanings and

realities? How to balance all different interests in Internet usage? The topic is extremely relevant as the emerging markets are witnessing a series of changing practices worldwide. New connectivity technologies and brand new application and content provisions demand more and more traffic as the user expands his/her visions of what the Internet is for.

TAGS:
#ZeroRating
#EmergingTechnologies
#InternetEconomy

Interventions:
The session is structured around three 30-minute segments. The first will count on a 10 minutes general introduction about the topic under discussion by one of the moderators, who will summarize his/her briefing by posing a policy question to the participants: how emerging technologies and new business models impact Internet dynamics? A 20-minute segment will follow in which participants in the round-table will be able to make 2-minute interventions at a time. In the second 30-minute segment, the other moderator will present some conceptual and practical challenges related to what kind of connectivity challenges and services/contents availability gaps should be highlighted to understand this scenario. Another 20-minute segment will follow in which participants in the round-table will be able to make 2-minute interventions at a time. The last part of the session will comprise a 30-minute open mic session that will be based on a policy question that delves into "what sort of regulatory challenges zero-rating practices present to this evolving Internet ecosystem". The last five minutes of the third segment will be used by the moderators to summarize discussions.

Diversity:
The list of confirmed and prospective speakers comprises people from all stakeholder groups and individuals who have convergent and divergent economic, political and social perspectives on the policy questions proposed. Moderators, debaters and speakers come from four different countries and half of them come from the developing World, some of them being newcomers to the IGF space.

Onsite Moderator: Carlos Afonso (Instituto Nupef)

Online Moderator: Oona Castro (Instituto Nupef)

Rapporteur: Vinicius W. O. Santos (NIC.br/CGI.br)

On line Participation:
On line participation and interaction will rely on the WebEx platform. Those joining the session using WebEx (either invited members of the round-table or the general audience) will be granted the floor in the Q&A segment of the workshop. People in charge of the moderation will strive to entertain onsite and remote participation indiscriminately. Social media (twitter and Facebook) will also be employed by the online moderator who will be in charge of browsing social media using some hashtags (to be defined).

Discussion facilitation:
The discussion will be facilitated by the on site moderators who will guide the debate in each of the proposed "rounds" for the workshop as well as during the Q&A and comments session. The online moderator will make sure the remote participants are represented in the debate.