



My two-year journey to the global IGF

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In only a few decades, the Internet has grown to be a truly transformative phenomenon, with the capacity to touch nearly every aspect of life. The Internet now connects almost half of the world's population and connectivity rates continue to expand apace, empowering users for both good and ill. All around us, we can see how digital technologies are transforming the economies in which we live, the cities we inhabit, the way we learn, and the lives we lead. Experience shows that growth and change in the digital age are faster and more pervasive than ever before, affecting more people at greater speed than was possible with previous generations of technology.

Keeping the openness and global connectivity that drives digital innovation and the free flow of information is of paramount importance. Internet governance truly supports both inclusive and sustainable growth of the internet through its core values that build the multistakeholderism approach to the global governance of the internet. Yet internet governance is often confused by many, as the government's role in policing the internet, but internet governance is complex and many-layered and for one to understand it better in most cases it depends with the background on whether you are from the technical community, government, academia or civil society because internet governance touches all those circles of our professional lives. For me the journey into this global hot topic started when I was first offered a fellowship to attend one of the regional internet conferences organized by the Africa RIR AFRINIC in Zambia where like anyone else being their first time as such meetings I only managed to get a piece of the confusion that goes around in these meetings.

When I returned home from the first meeting I was excited with the small pieces I had gathered but I still had an interest to understand more on this topic, and I applied for a fellowship with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) in 2014 I attended one for their conferences in Singapore and it was a historic meeting for me because it is the same year that the US government had announced that it will be relinquishing its last bit of control over the Internet. Now because technology experts and innovators, research and management institutions, businesses, governments and civil

society organizations are among those who collaborate to set standards, policies and maintain infrastructure attending a meeting organized by one of the institutions allows one to appreciate mainly what their role is in the global issue of the internet governance. From the ICANN meeting I understood partly the role that ICANN plays in the global internet governance platform but I still wondered what internet governance really was and how it affects us all.

In 2016 after my ICANN 55 in Marrakesh Morocco one of the colleague told me about the European Summer School on Internet Governance (EuroSSIG) which helps interested students and academics as well as individuals working in the private sector or in government, to understand better the global Internet Governance controversy and to get a comprehensive and structured knowledge on the various aspects of Internet Governance. When the fellowship program came out that year I applied and fortunately I was offered the partial scholarship that allowed me to finally dive into the global controversy topic of internet governance and learn all about this complex topic and thanks to the environment at Meissen best suited for learning environment where the only thing you get to talk to are either the faculty members or your fellow student all talking about the lectures. Right at the end of the summer school, Amazon offered to provide three fellowships to the graduating students who would apply for the slot to go and attend the 11th annual IGF meeting in Guadalajara Mexico and for me this was a defining moment because I had wanted to learn and see what goes in at the Global Internet Governance Forum. Fortunately I was selected for the fellowship and your guess is as good as mine, I was over the moon that finally I was going to attend the global meeting that focuses on nothing but open internet for everyone around the world.



Lunch with the Amazon & EuroSSIG representatives

In Guadalajara, I was excited to have interacted through various sessions which I attended and I soon realized that the platform is for everyone to give their voice/ input on this global topic. Without the internet, families are torn apart without any contact; emergency services cannot share vital information; and businesses lose money. In dangerous situations people cannot find out the latest information; journalists cannot share important news; and whole countries are silenced, such concerns and many other that affect the governance of internet were the only voices I heard throughout all the sessions I attended. Amazon gave me a platform where I could learn from the people that are working tirelessly for the better and open internet for everyone. This was an opportunity and a great experience that I will forever cherish and reach out to my community and contribute to our national IGF. One thing I was very proud of was the comment session of the first comers sessions where I voiced out some of the concerns

which I believed are also in the best interest of many countries that have not yet established their national IGF chapters yet because of lack of information which is not readily available on the global IGF website.

The 11th IGF meeting changed the way I will look at the issue and the topic of Internet Governance because for me this was where it needed to make sense and give me a clear guidance on this global controversial topic, I also enjoyed the networking sessions that allowed me to meet new friends and share my experience and learn from them some of the things. Just like Internet technology is constantly changing, the administration and governance of that technology is constantly changing and it is very important that people should care about Internet governance because it is necessary to keep the Internet working,” and “because the basic systems of our social life and economy are dependent upon this infrastructure.” Not only our ability to communicate with each other, but our free access to information, entertainment and financial transactions involve the Internet. The internet has become a great amplifier of human potential and continues to open up new horizons for connecting people, and for sharing ideas and information. This is already having a profound impact as an enabling medium for democratization, the promotion, exercise and enjoyment of human rights, as well as for realizing human development and exercising of economic, socio-political and cultural rights