

Social Media and Global Internet Governance: Innovations and Limitations

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Abstract

The article explores and assesses the potential for democratic participation in Internet governance using social media sites and services. A framing question asks, “How can social media better serve coalition building and deliberative governance platforms on an international level?” This paper considers present-day challenges and opportunities to help arrive at best practices and future recommendations.

Introduction

Social media provides innovative tools for dynamic forms of communication, altering the ways information is circulated and shared, and affording more agency to users and citizens. Social media sites and services (microblogs-Twitter, social network sites-Facebook, user content sites-YouTube) have recently been recognized as important tools for distributed reporting, routing around government censors, raising awareness enabling democratic participation, and engaging a broader public sphere. The technological affordances and communication dynamics of social media can help citizens disseminate information and reach the international community; and it can make it more difficult for repressive regimes to quell citizens’ free speech. The most prominent account of social media enhancing democratic participation is the often cited post-election protests in Iran in June of 2009, with news disseminated on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, prompting some to call it a “Twitter Revolution” (Ambinder, 2009). Social media has also been hailed as the long awaited set of applications that will enable “Athenian style direct democracy,” where “every citizen is connected to the state” and can participate directly in policy-making (Giridharadas, 2009; Hickins, 2009). The Barack Obama presidential campaign in the U.S is widely recognized for its innovative use of interactive communication tools including social networks, user-content sites, and websites to enable direct engagement between volunteers/voters and the campaign /candidate. In spite of these exciting developments, there are also limitations when using social media for democratic participation and organization. The contingencies of offline realities continue to discourage the use of online tools. Nation-states infiltrate SNSs to misinform, surveil and entrap (Tehrani, 2009; Toomer, 2009). Ad-supported social media services bring uncertainty to user privacy, with social media companies accessing user data for secondary purposes. Intellectual property and failure to recognize fair use also places limitations on user-generated content. And social media tools not originally created for political participation may actually discourage and distract from more productive ways of

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participating (Morozov, 2009). Indeed, given these limitations, it is vitally important to ask, “does Web 2.0 hinder or help democratic citizenship?” (Chadwick, 2009, p. 196). Or put another way, “does social media offer a sea change in democratic participation and how can this be applied to Internet governance?” This paper sets out to answer this last question by examining both the innovations and limitations of social media for Internet governance by analyzing real uses of social media by both the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights and Principles (IRP).

The success of IGF as a participatory platform and process could be vital for future iterations of the body as it becomes more formalized in the future. Emerging participatory practices afforded by social media may enhance IGF governance processes, in the following areas: 1) stakeholder and IGF interaction, 2) multi-stakeholder participation, 3) coordination within and between Dynamic Coalitions (all fourteen of them), 4) deliberation and decision-making, 5) convening, 6) and increased but guided public participation in the IGF (capacity building). (See Figure 1 for an IGF organizational structure chart).

The experiment of the IGF as an international body to generate dialogue on Internet governance policy is at a crossroads—just over a year or so away from being reevaluated and perhaps formalized into something less innovative, less flexible, and less accessible to civil society participants. The IGF has introduced many innovations that have enlarged the participation of government, private sector, and civil society participants (as well as international organizations and technical communities). These innovations include first putting the issue of Internet governance under the purview of the United Nations, under the Secretariat, enabling a means to expand the social and political implications of Internet governance from merely technical issues towards public policy issues, allowing equal status to all stakeholders, and enabling a new international regime or epistemic community to take shape (Krasner, 1982; Haas, 1990). The second innovation is requesting relatively equal participation from various sectors through equal multi-stakeholder composition (government, private, and civil society) in a multi-stakeholder advisory group (MAG) and in the third innovation, the creation of Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), that together, could put into motion a process for formulating and enacting the “principles, norms, and values of an emergent international regime to govern the information society in general and the Internet specifically” (Cogburn 2009, p. 413). Although the IGF is not designed to be a deliberative body that makes binding and enforceable policy decisions, it does have political effects in creating the principles, norms, and values that can guide policy going forward. The critical role IGF plays, then, is encouraging dynamic, meaningful, and equitable participation from the multiple sectors among developed and developing countries, distributed geographically (Cogburn, 2009).

Framework, methodology, approach

The governance structure and processes introduced by IGF provide opportunities to integrate social media in ways that enhance both remote and local participation in the yearly forums and throughout the year. Best practices of how to use social media are identified through comparative analysis of social media uses by IGF and Dynamic

Coalitions. A normative approach provides recommendations; advocating ways that social media can and should be adopted by IGF, MAG, and DCs. This is balanced by an “empirical analysis of actual uses” (Dutton & Peltu, 2009, p. 398) through case studies of both the IGF and IRP to determine potential limitations, issues, and areas for improvement in utilizing social media for membership-based groups. Both IGF and IRP utilize Facebook pages and groups, Twitter, blogs, RSS feeds, and websites to collect data, engage stakeholders, organize, deliberate, and build a networked public sphere. This paper assesses IGF’s integration of social media into remote participation and IRP’s use of social media for self-organization, mobilization, recruitment, inter-coalition building, and participating in global Internet deliberations. Social network analysis, including networks-as-structure and networks-as-actor, provides a framework for examining the creation of application of social power. Insights from international regime theory help identify how norms and principles, reinforced through social networks, can guide policy formulation and decision-making. Statistics that indicate where members/followers of the services are located and which languages they speak provide further insight. And an assessment of international adoption rates and usage patterns of social media also help identify the benefits and limitations for coalition building on a global scale.

An understanding of remote participation in the IGF is necessary to determine how social media can be integrated into existing practices. Remote participation holds much potential for broadening and strengthening participation, building awareness, and stimulating public discourse around Internet Governance issues.

Remote Participation: an overview of the Internet Governance Forum’s (IGF) uses of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)

IGF has increasingly applied ICTs to enhance participation at yearly meetings. In the inaugural meeting in Athens (2006), forms of remote participation were utilized in both the main plenary sessions and the workshops (Cogburn, 2009, p. 408). In the plenary sessions, real time transcripts were made available on the IGF website, panels were webcast with multilingual audio feeds also made available. The IGF website functions as a repository of data, containing a record of the proceedings. Points of contact from remote participants were provided by email and mobile phone lines, which provided interactive channels into the main sessions and enabled questions and comments to be conveyed to face-to-face attendees. In workshops outside of the plenary sessions, web conferencing technologies were utilized to enable synchronous, interactive participation, suggesting future direction for utilizing ICTs in IGF meetings. At the second forum in Rio in 2007, the forum’s structure also included plenary sessions and workshops, with the main sessions translated into “all official UN languages” and webcast with streamed captioning (Mathieson, 2009, p. 139). Interaction was more limited in Rio, with less interaction between remote participants and those attending the forum. At the third forum in Hyderabad in 2008, things were different. IGF offered live video, audio and text streams, as well as live chat. Interactivity and participation was also enhanced by the efforts of the Remote Participation Working Group (RPWG) which helped more than 500 participants join the sessions, provided by eight interactive regional hubs (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Serbia, India, Pakistan and two in Spain) utilizing web conferencing technologies (Dimdim), enabling “attendance” or “presence,” and input into the

workshops. Remote participation can help provide input in the form of questions and comments, shape opinions, aggregate views to help form consensus, and it can encourage collaboration and networking outside of the meeting (MarillaFM, 2008). Remote hubs also ran meetings parallel to the place-based sessions providing opportunities to “discuss the themes of the IGF from a local perspective [giving] birth to a series of autonomous activities based on local needs.” As Marilia Maciel of the RPWG eloquently states:

“The hubs are also a way to raise awareness about IG issues to favor community building and networking, and to foster follow up initiatives. The hubs are also a way to strengthen the IGF by reinforcing its legitimacy and its multi-stakeholder characteristics, while empowering individual Internet users.” (MarillaFM, 2008)

Social media integrated with existing forms of remote participation can enhance interaction and participation within the forum and beyond. I’ll now turn to outlining the functions, uses, and dynamics of social media that can support Internet governance processes.

Social media’s uses, functions, and features

Social media are web-based tools, sites, and services that provide users with dynamic ways to interact, create, and share in read/write web culture, where users are also producers, and interaction and participation is encouraged. Social media or “mass self-communication platforms” (Castells, 2009), include macroblogs (Wordpress, Blogger, Blogspot), microblogs (Twitter, Yammer, Yelp), content-sharing sites (YouTube, Flickr, delicious), and social network sites (Facebook, MySpace, etc).

Individual and group uses of social media include self expression, intimacy building, impression management, identity construction, entertainment, therapy, advertising or branding (building audiences and consumers), political activism, advocacy, democratic participation and governance (building coalitions, movements, and an engaged citizenry).

A prominent feature of social network sites (SNS), a subset of social media, is their ability to “enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks” (boyd & Ellison, 2006, p. 2). Articulated networks enable users to view each other’s extended links, providing a form of transparency that reveals larger connective patterns for future networking across communities of interest.

Although social media provides a means to participate, there can be a range of participation in social media, from passive to active. Participation on content sharing sites like YouTube provides opportunities to participate but also to build reputations, popularity, and even power. New insights into how young people use social media, including digital natives (those born from 1980 onward with access to computers, mobile phones, etc; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008); suggest a relationship between social status and level of participation (i.e. by sending messages, posting videos and photos, tagging, and commenting; Skog, 2005). The social implications of user participation on SNS or content-sharing sites related to status could provide a means of building social capital or

social power (as opposed to material capital and power). Social power can be disseminated unequally here as well as in other spaces, and can be determined by access, adoption rates, as well as language use. To increase participation, social media offer more support for multilingualism. International languages are represented on YouTube, Facebook is available in over sixty-five languages, and Twitter supports as many languages with the development of translation applications (Babylon, Interlecta, etc). Nevertheless, English is the dominant language on these social media services.

Social media sites provide great opportunities for self-expression, creativity, and engagement with commercial and non-commercial forms of culture. They can also constitute vast publics and provide the potential for democratic forms of participation. Raghavan of YouTube Nonprofits & Activism identifies three ways that nonprofits can utilize videos on sites like YouTube for making change, which includes: 1) raising awareness, 2) creating connections, and 3) driving action—from shaping opinions and framing issues, to participating in campaigns (2009).

Looking closer at the two most prevalent forms of social network services, Twitter and Facebook, we can identify multiple levels of control, openness, and transparency that can be utilized for varying levels of participation. The communication dynamics of social media include a combination of direct messaging (one to one), self-mass communication (one to many), and narrowcasting (one to few or interactive). For example, Twitter enables users to send direct messages privately to individuals, they can also broadcast their “tweets” to the public timeline, and users can also lock “tweets” setting them to private so that only followers can view their posts. Facebook users communicate to individuals or to groups through emails, comments, wall posts and status updates within the site. Facebook also enables Instant Messaging, an immediate two-way interactive communication feature that Twitter does not offer.

Social media promotes participatory values by enabling sharing, commenting, and responding. Commenting features enable interaction and encourage participation in the form of dialogue - talking back. Facebook enables comments and the ability to share status updates, stories, wall posts, images, and videos. Twitter users comment through direct messages and by reposting or “retweeting” (RT) other’s messages, circulating short bits of information and links that coincide with memes or the thought unit celebrated in hyper-mediated digital culture accounts by Mark Dery (1993). Messages are often retweeted over and over, with accrediting built in through the placement of the @symbol before a prior sender’s account name (i.e. RT @intgovforum). In this way, information circulates outward from network to network, across communities of followers. Social media also encourages sharing from one service to another.

A technological feature that contributes to social media’s adoption is achieved through open APIs (Application Programming Interface). APIs are programming scripts that web companies share with one another to ensure interoperability. Twitter’s open API encourages its use in many different contexts; it has been promiscuously adopted by a number of applications (TweetDeck, TwitterFox, Twitterrific, twhirl, Twitpic) to enable tweets, photographs, and other media to be sent and received in a variety of contexts

(SNS, search engines, mobile devices, television shows, Second Life, and software platforms). Facebook has over 950,000 application developers that create quizzes, applications, and ways to syndicate Facebook feeds in other contexts (Barriger, 2009).

Facebook and Twitter enable both individual and group user accounts. A Facebook group page enables members to join a group, access material on the page (information, photos, posts), comment and associate with other members within a community built around the group. Members can also add a group badge to their own page as indication of their membership. Group pages, however, have been eclipsed by fan pages as they offer a membership-based group a range of interactive features and applications including the ability to post status updates to a fan's news feed page, and to syndicate status updates elsewhere. The group account helps provide a collective space for community building; but the enclosed environment makes Facebook ill suited to integration with live offline convening.

Live tweeting compliments remote participation and face-to-face attendance. A targeted search function on Twitter—placing hashtags (# symbol) before topics—enables users to follow topic-specific messages in real time and augments participation at events. A recent study of Twitter use at conferences reveals how live tweeting enhances the learning experience as users share information with each other, post links to related web resources, and interact with Twitter users who are unable to attend (Perez, 2009). Twitter provides another interactive channel that can give users access to meetings, discussions, and events.

Comparing the features and services of social media can help inform a group's social media strategy of using distinct services or combining them. One way to leverage social media is through a multiplatform approach provided by cross-posting or the syndication of messages on various “web platforms simultaneously” (Global Voices Advocacy, 2009). This “broad dissemination approach” can help organizations and campaigns connect to their core audience while reaching new niche members in new online spaces (ibid). However, the norms of a given social media service should be observed when considering addressing levels of participation and the direction of syndication feeds. For example, pushing numerous Twitter feeds to Facebook fan pages might irritate fans due to a potentially less active participation status.

Social media enables access, participation, collaboration and transparency, which can potentially enhance governance processes and facilitate participation from a broad-based constituency. The features of social media can be applied to many aspects of Internet governance, including: 1) convening or expanding the space, time, and inputs of physical meetings; 2) direct involvement in deliberations, decision making procedures, and policy formulation; 3) aggregating consensus to help establish collective choice; 4) maintaining participation between MAG meetings and open consultation meetings; 5) building broad based networks or coalition building; 6) expanding user participation (remote and present); 7) negotiating and articulating norms, principles, rules and procedures; 8) strengthening ties among stakeholders (within and between Dynamic Coalitions); and 9) strengthening connections to the Internet Governance Forum.

Social media in action: case studies of actual uses

International regime theory, social network analysis, and empirical observation will help guide an assessment of how social media is being used by both the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights and Principles (IRP).

IGF

At the Third Annual Internet Governance Forum held in Hyderabad, India (2008), the IGF began utilizing new online tools including the video sharing site YouTube and the photo sharing site Flickr. A dedicated IGF YouTube Channel was inaugurated by an “Invitation” video from Marcus Kummer, Executive Coordinator of IGF, inviting users to “send in comments, views, questions . . . our aim is to give every person an equal voice and we want to hear yours” (IGFa). More than a broadcast medium, YouTube was conceived as a new convening space. In an interview conducted at the Forum in Hyderabad, Chengetai Masango, Program and Technology Manager of the IGF, discusses the IGF YouTube channel as a tool for feedback and interaction, “if people have questions, issues, or comments they want to make, they can use the YouTube channel. Its youtube.com/igf and anybody is free to upload a video, ask questions, and get responses back from other stakeholders” (IGFb). The YouTube Channel was also created to provide a continuum between meetings, “we want this YouTube channel to continue throughout the year and keep it alive . . .” (ibid). To date, the IGF YouTube channel has approximately 100 videos uploaded by IGF stakeholders; many posted around the dates of the annual forum and open consultation planning meetings that proceed the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) meetings (which occur three times a year—February, May and September at the Palais des Nations in Geneva). Videos update viewers about upcoming activities including workshops and roundtables to engage participation at the annual forum. The IGF YouTube channel not only provides a space to facilitate participation, it also provides a means to guide it.

The YouTube channel functions as outreach and participation, but it also extends governance activities consistent with international regime theory. Regime theory, founded by Stephen D. Krasner, defines how government decisions can be influenced, “constrained and guided” (Mathieson, 2009, p. 3), by “implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures” (Krasner, 1983) from “a host of formal and informal, state and non-state, national and transnational practices” (Neuman & Sending, 2004, p.1). This host of practices can be carried out through various stakeholders and contexts and form a coherent “regime” that can collectively and persuasively communicate norms and principles to governments. The theory suggests ways state-less actors can cooperate along issues of international concern. YouTube videos from stakeholders function as position statements that articulate principles or as Krasner states, “beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude” (qtd. in Mathieson 17). These video statements can frame how issues are discussed at the Forum, which in turn, can help guide how policy recommendations are formulated and implemented. For example, if network neutrality is repeatedly articulated as critical to accessing and sharing information stated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),

then perhaps stakeholders will begin to discuss net neutrality in terms of access, here framed within the context of human rights: “. . . to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers” (ibid). Human rights guides policy; maintaining net neutrality as a principle is now understood within the context of fundamental human rights. Similarly, issues such as privacy, multilingualism, and Internet censorship can be framed in such a way as to shape the parameters of discussion and, as regime theory suggests, influence public opinion and state decision-making behavior.

Making a distinction between governance and government, or “steering not rowing” (MacLean, 2004, pp. 79-80), identifies how Internet governance is conceived by the IGF (and the body that created it - the World Group on Internet Governance), not as coercion but through guided outcomes. Governance through regime theory appears well adapted to the fluid “borderless and multi-stakeholder nature of the Internet” (Mathieson, 2009, p.17). “Steering” includes guiding forms of persuasion and power known as social power. Social power in international relations theory can be understood as power derived from social capital based on “relational ties between actors” (ibid, p. 29). Social media can help disseminate social power by enabling levels of participation on content-sharing sites and SNS. Social media can also be used to provide identification, group cohesion, and a sense of community.

In Hyderabad, an IGF Flickr Group was created, allowing members to post links specific to the year’s forum, accessible through the IGF website. Members could either post to the Group or simply tag their photos “IGF” or “Hyderabad.” To date there are over 1,447 uploads with the IGF tag. Photos feature speakers, highlights of meetings, site-seeing of host cities, and many group shots. Group photos help identify and possibly secure relationships among stakeholders, generating a good feeling and visualizing group identity, “seeing oneself as a participant.” Group cohesion can, in turn, encourage a greater sense of commitment to fellow stakeholders, to IGF deliberations, and to IGF itself as a representative body and institution.

IGF now offers a Facebook group, Facebook fan page, and two Twitter accounts (accessible through IGF’s web page under “Tools for Interaction”). The IGF Facebook fan page created in July of 2009 has over 454 fans and is accessible to all who wish to follow. The fan page allows the posting of videos, photos, and links. As part of a “broad dissemination” approach, videos from the open consultation meetings and other events available on the IGF YouTube Channel are cross-fed to IGF’s Facebook fan page. Facebook is part of the multi-platform syndication chain, reaching “new niche audiences . . . beyond . . . [the] most loyal supporters (Global Voices Advocacy, 2009). IGF’s Facebook fan page also provides another tab for “fan” posts, offering a separate space for user participation within the community. IGF utilizes Facebook to expand user participation, disseminate information, and provide outreach, connecting people back to IGF’s YouTube channel or to the IGF website via the information tab.

The IGF website “is the main source of contact between the secretariat and the stakeholders” (qtd. in Kurbalija 2008). The IGF website is largely a repository with few

interactive features or means for “talking back” or dialog. A discussion board provides a space to post statements, but activity is low with few responses or original posts or responses from IGF staff. “Tools for participation” provide links to social media sites that take users away from the site.

Twitter can enable interaction between IGF and “followers.” IGF has two Twitter accounts, “intgovforum” (<http://twitter.com/intgovforum>) with 183 followers and “igfremote” (<http://twitter.com/igfremote>) with 54 followers. Twitter’s use may be identified as either broadcast or more interactive depending on the account’s “follower” to “following” ratio (and “retweeting” behavior). Twitter provides the means to follow others back, however “intgovforum” follows only one other account “igfremote.” This reciprocating feature is not utilized by IGF’s Twitter account “intgovforum,” limiting the potential for stakeholder exchange with IGF. IGF’s second account, “igfremote,” with 54 followers and following 12, indicates a broader exchange among participants and “followers.” Twitter can be included in a syndication chain of cross-posts, ultimately leading users back to an organization’s or institution’s website. However, IGF’s Twitter accounts do not provide websites or information in their “Bios,” discouraging linking back to IGF’s website. Given the diverse and varied social media options, it is important to lead users back to the source.

As the IGF enters its fourth year it has an opportunity to utilize multiple forms of social media, providing interactive channels that feed directly into “all meetings, large and small, formal and informal” (Cogburn, 2009, p. 413). This may further encourage broad-based participation from stakeholders, present and remote, during forums and the days in between. This participation can bring more people into the process of establishing procedures, norms, and principles, and opportunities to build social power. Social media enhances IGF’s role in facilitating Internet governance by enabling stakeholders to participate and interact with the IGF. A vitally important aspect of multi-stakeholder participation is the relationships among stakeholders. The multi-stakeholder composition is one of the chief innovations of the IGF and comprises both the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), with roughly equal participation from each. These broad-based coalitions formed from government, private industry, and civil society groups and individuals, require active participation to establish relational ties and social power within and between themselves. The work produced by DCs provides critically important public policy formulations that outline causes and effects, and provide recommendations to steer debate, deliberations, and decision making. Actual uses of social media by the Dynamic Coalition of Internet Rights and Principles can provide insight into enhancing participation within DCs and between them.

IRP

The Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights and Principles (IRP), “has set out to make Rights on the Internet and their related duties, specified from the point of view of individual users, a central theme of the Internet Governance debate held in the IGF context” (IRP, 2008). As one of fourteen DCs under MAG and the Secretariat (IGF staff), the IRP is unique in pursuing both an explicit individual mandate, and in seeking to provide a collaborative statement related to Human Rights on the Internet. These two

outcomes, 1) to strengthen the ties within the coalition and 2) to strengthen ties and provide coordination among DCs, will guide an analysis of IRP's uses of social media.

As recent social media officer of IRP, running its Twitter and Facebook accounts, I have access and input into the coalition's social media strategy. The coalition set up a website using Drupal, "an open source content management platform" (<http://drupal.org/>). The site provides a transparent repository with background information about the DC. The home site also fulfills an outreach function with an invitation video and a direct address to visitors to help collaborate on authoring joint reports. The site also integrates social media feeds and interoperable "widgets." Unlike IGF's website that offers external links to social media services, taking away users from the site, IRP's website displays content feeds from external social media sites on the organization's website, keeping users on the site. Like IGF's website, IRP's coalition website provides transparency and a repository of information including the structure of IRP as outlined in the organizational charter, (a Steering Committee, Chair, and General Membership), membership lists including roughly 97 participants, and background information about the coalition's origins, mission and vision. Other online resources available on the website include news features, studies, reports and announcements.

The primary Web 2.0 features utilized in the IRP social media toolbox include wikis, a coalition blog and individual aggregated blogs, videos (from blip.tv and YouTube), Twitter, Facebook group and fan pages, and delicious links—a social bookmark-sharing service. An important aspect of IRP's website reveals the dynamics of cross-posting. IRP blogs can be fed to its Facebook fan page, the Facebook fan page can syndicate back to the Facebook widget on IRP's website, but also can be fed to the Twitter account. Cross-posting provides ways of reaching out to new constituents in unique communicative spaces. Social media provides outreach, but it also plays a role in self-governance and broader coordination efforts within the coalition through the creation and implementation of social power, which can be examined through social network analysis.

The social science research methodology known as social network analysis (SNA) assumes that patterns of interactions shape social structures (Kahler, 2009, p. 27). Social structures, once established through mutual dependency, diffusion of resources, and patterns of associations, can enable or restrict certain outcomes or behavior (ibid). This methodology helps explain how social power is disseminated or dispersed through relational ties. According to SNA, the successful diffusion of power lies not in the characteristics of an issue or the traits of an agent, but in the structure of the network (ibid). Two different approaches to SNA include network-as-structure and network-as-actor, which provide complementary but distinct approaches to analyzing networks. The network-as-structure approach examines the structure and flow of information exchange over a network. The network as actor approach looks at "how the relationships among members allow them to . . . coordinate their activity, act collectively and produce joint outcomes" (Stein, 2009, p. 151). Both approaches help provide some insight into networks and their uses.

Accounting for both the structure of a distributed network and prior relationships among

members can indicate how the IRP listserv provide linkages for creating social power, sharing, collaborating, and implementing collective choice among members. The existing structure of the IRP network includes the chair, general members, steering committee, as well as Facebook followers and Twitter fans. A combination of Web 1.0 (read only) and Web 2.0 (read/write) features provides focused communication for specific needs of the coalition, and helps provide channels that can connect established users with new ones. The IRP listserv serves the general membership and is utilized for specific functions of internal governance including coordination and internal deliberations. The IRP listserv reaches the general membership through a distributed communication function where all members can be connected to all members. It could follow that the structure of the network allows for equal participation, however, prior relationships between members also influence the flow of information, as members will likely read and respond more readily to messages from members already familiar to them. And members without strong ties or relationships may be reluctant to post at all. Governance functions—as outlined by regime theory—including rules-making and decision-making procedures are also carried out on the listserv and in monthly meetings (over VOIP, conference calls, and web conferencing technologies).

IRP's social media strategy attempts to combine communication dynamics including interpersonal, mass communication, and mass self-communication (Castells, 2009) to encourage and guide participation based on access and transparency, group identification, and issue-based messaging (framing the message). IRP utilizes a wide range of interactive social media tools (the website, blogs, wikis, Facebook and Twitter) to enable diverse levels of participation (“join us, join up, join in;” Wilcox, 2009); utilizing the network features of social media to strengthen existing ties while attempting to grow the coalition.

Governance within Dynamic Coalitions and within the IGF involves formulating principles and shaping opinion (“beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude;” Krasner qtd. in Mathieson, 2009, p. 17). Shaping opinion requires education, raising awareness and advocacy. Social network sites are particularly suited to the role of education and advocacy, meeting people where they already are and providing multimedia links a diversity of sources. IRP's interactive Facebook fan page raises awareness and frames issues by reaching out to new and existing members through status updates in the form of daily news, analysis, advocacy pieces, and reports. Reports are focused on human rights implications of various aspects of Internet governance (privacy, net neutrality, the digital divide and access, democratic uses of ICTs, and non commercial user representation in ICANN). Daily posts on IRP's Facebook page function to reinforce causal and conceptual linkages between information rights and human rights. These linkages are not always natural, evident or supported by mainstream media. Facebook fan pages can also be used for capacity-building, encouraging users to identify with the coalition and to participate more fully by joining the listserv and collaborating on reports and workshops. Possible effectiveness and limitations can also be understood by examining the use, structure, and composition of these networks.

The network structure of Facebook links newer and more established members together

within the coalition. The interactive structure of Facebook's fan pages links users to users, and also provides a somewhat centralized structure. Fans can be viewed as edge nodes receiving information provided by IRP as a central hub. Indeed the IRP fan page administrator(s) provides status updates can be fed directly into user's daily newsfeed pages. But fans can also interact with each other and the coalition, through comments and posts of their own, enabling two-way communication to the group. Fans also interact through fan wall posts, comments, and "likes" with interactions measured weekly from "Insights" or analysis provided by the SNS company. Interaction data can provide important feedback for the page administrator to judge the relevance of stories selected for the community; this feedback can also guide the selection of issues reported by indicating the kinds of status updates that elicit responses and participation.

Facebook "Insights" also provide broad user demographics including geographic representation and language use, which can help suggest areas for growing the "fan-base" or potential stakeholders. A majority of IRP's fans are European males between the ages of 25-44. Top countries include Germany, US, Italy, Spain, Argentina, the UK, Mexico, Switzerland and Hong Kong. Top languages include English, Dutch, Spanish, and Italian. This composition reflects uneven participation and geographic distribution among developed and developing countries (which also reflects Facebook's adoption rates generally; Lorica, 2009). However, Facebook is expanding in Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa, and elsewhere; IRP's Facebook fan composition may also become more geographically distributed as a result of new adoption trends (ibid). Demographics also reflect how certain issues can impact people unevenly, as well as how certain issues prove central to users' notions of information rights in their particular region and country.

Twitter is utilized by IRP for interacting, messaging, establishing relational ties, and advocating for Internet policy. The social affordances of Twitter provide IRP with a means of speaking and listening—a context where dialog can take place among stakeholders. Twitter enables more lateral ties based on reciprocal following and "retweeting." The network structure of a Twitter account can depend on the ratio of followers to those followed. Recall that IGF's Twitter account, <http://twitter.com/intgovforum> follows only one other account. In contrast, IRP's account <http://twitter.com/netrights> maintains almost equal number of followers to those followed, and attempts dialog through equal channels of access and interaction. Reciprocated linking provides a more equal basis for relationship building, to help form alliances and build capacity. Each follower possesses their own local network, which can reach outward in ever-expanding diffuse relational patterns. Social power is extended outward through followers and interaction is extended from following back.

Social media can build and strengthen relationships within coalitions, but they can also build relationships between them. Currently, an inter-DC network does not exist; DCs are relatively isolated, without established channels for interlinking or cross-posting among them (see figure 2). The network as actor approach suggests that linkages between individual stakeholders can allow individuals to act collectively. However, from a network as structure perspective, these relationships are tenuous, with existing small - scale network nodes being structurally fragile. Before discussing how social media can

strengthen ties and improve coordination between DCs, outlining social media's limitations will temper sanguine hopes about a technological fix to equal participation, collaboration and capacity building.

Limitations

Many limitations exist when using Web 2.0 services for enhancing multi-stakeholder participation and dialog. A fundamental limitation in using SNS to provide equitable means of participation lies in the global disparity in Internet access. SNS users are not equally geographically dispersed. Even with rising international adoption rates, preferred social media services may still reflect a class or education-level bias leading to a disparity in use (Hargittai, 2009); those with access but with less information literacy or user savvy may also be left out. Additionally, intercultural information ethics literature (Capurro, 2009) poses several challenges related to cultural biases built into information society. This work addresses the potential impact of ICTs on cultural, economic, social, and political development. Of chief concern is the danger of Western values and biases built into the design and implementation of computer mediated communication technologies or "computer mediated colonization" (Ess, 2007).

A tendency in Web 2.0 or read/write web rhetoric is "techno-deterministic optimism" (Fuchs, 2009, p. 96). Social media managers can observe "interactions" and demographics, yet it is difficult to discern levels of dedication (Schultz, 2009). And for many, joining a social network is "often the end - rather than the beginning - of [one's] engagement with a cause" (Morozov, 2009). Over-reliance on social media or ICT in general can undermine efforts that require commitment and follow-through. Network structures and relationships can be established, but there is no magic bullet for participation, and much depends on centralized leadership and incentives beyond group identification. There must be buy-in or a sense of shared ownership. Social media can encourage this, but not determine it.

Turning technological determinism on its head, mainstream social media sites and services were not designed for activism or for governance, though they can be used for both. Because these uses are unintended, a commercial SNS may be ill-suited to them (Morozov, 2009). The down side to many social media tools is that they do not allow the level of control in tailoring group tools to group needs (i.e. Facebook's 5,000 person cap on fans; Schultz 10). Rather, social media sites are designed to encourage participation in ways that serve an advertising-based revenue model; a model with users on social networks constituting an "audience commodity" and their data, behavior, tastes, and connections collected, classified, aggregated and shared to "generate profit by targeted advertising" within a finite "attention economy" (Fuchs 2009, pp. 99, 101).

Limitations arise with regard to privacy and the lack of control over one's data in Web 2.0. There is growing concern over privacy and security on social networks, with SNS's data handling practices increasingly called into question and government and employer surveillance on SNS occurring (Barriger, 2009). Although the Internet industry prefers self-regulatory measures for protecting user privacy, overtures have been made to allow direct user participation in social media governance, including collaborating and voting

on Terms of Service agreements (Zittrain, 2009). But with a lack of transparency and clear conflicts of interest, some speculate that this is merely “Democracy Theatre” (Bonneau, Preibusch, Anderson, Clayton, & Anderson, 2009). The capacity for economic and state surveillance on commercial SNSs suggests online spaces are needed “which are autonomous from state and capital” (Fuchs, 2009, p. 100).

Recommendations

In a study of the potential of cyber-infrastructure for Internet governance, Derrick Cogburn proposes integrating collaborative technologies into “the institutionalized policy processes of global Internet governance to better include developing countries and civil society participants” (2009, p. 410). Cogburn suggests a digital “policy collaboratory” and outlines several of its functionalities: presence awareness (i.e. through instant messaging), digital repositories, Web conferencing, and application sharing (pp. 411-412). To bring these functionalities up to date, emerging social media tools can enhance presence awareness, web sites can provide digital repositories, and web conferencing tools and cloud computing infrastructure can provide application sharing. But Cogburn touches on an important point, the “collaboratory” would be an autonomous space, free of capital and state influence and oversight. An institution or coalition’s website is perhaps their only autonomous space, given private sector ownership of social media services. But sometimes engaging a broader public requires a hybrid approach, integrating available commercial services into existing practices, processes and spaces. The social media tools that both IGF and IRP integrate into their governance efforts may have limitations, but combined with other tools and remote participation efforts, they may be the next best thing. To recall Michel de Certeau’s distinction between tactics and strategies: tactics are short term and intervene in another’s environment, while strategy is long term and exercises power in one’s own environment (1984, p.xix). In theorizing political agency with social media, both tactics and strategy are needed—“the efficacious opportunity and the sustainable alternative” (Bodle 2004, p. 15). Social media provides opportunities to reach people where they are and exploit new communication dynamics, while institutional websites can offer more control and guide participation in multi-stakeholderism. Both IGF and IRP can continue to adopt new media practices and new ways to reach out to stakeholders and collaborate.

As a digital repository, IGF can augment their written transcripts and audio files of meetings with video recordings streaming video on its own website and mirrored on other user-generated content sites. Videos of all meetings can be videotaped, edited, translated with subtitles, tagged and archived for meaningful online consumption. Twitter may also be used for interaction and exchange by following stakeholders and feeding tweets back to an IGF webpage. Additionally, IGF ought to utilize specific interactive channels to link each dynamic coalition together, providing a decentralized and robust network structure that will enhance DC’s interactions. IGF can establish lateral links for stakeholder-IGF interaction through blogs, wikis, mobile applications, and virtual worlds (Second Life), and utilize competing forms of social media, not only the most prevalent. Additionally, increased cross-posting can help IGF reach beyond the limited demographics of a given social network. Perhaps sites that offer clear and human-readable user agreements that clarify user rights to content and promote fair use can be

utilized (i.e. video sharing site blip.tv). The IGF can also interact with stakeholders on its site to provide direct inputs into deliberations and decision-making through surveys, collaborative authoring projects, and hosting online roundtables and forums from remote participation hubs. Additionally, non ad-based social media sites might provide more secure channels for information exchange and collaboration.

Multi-stakeholder participation can be enhanced if each Dynamic Coalition connected with one another through a network structure and through individual ties. Stakeholders need to establish stronger relational ties in order to collaborate. Listservs can be created that link DCs, and social media can be implemented to build networks and enhance two-way flows of communication through them. Social networks dedicated to inter-coalition building can provide lateral links that promote regime building and raise awareness about the interconnections between them. Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and an inter-coalition collaborative blog site can strengthen ties around issues and further participation and exchange. Implementing social power over new social networks and linkages can help push responsibility to the edges of the network and encourage meaningful involvement and participation. A more distributed network structure may also take the pressure off of fragile one-to-one relationships that now connect the coalitions, which may then provide more agency and stimulate greater participation. SNSs can also help develop stronger ties between the Secretariat, Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the Dynamic Coalitions (see Figure 3).

Social media can help strengthen ties among participants by providing a network structure with lateral links between actors, but also by creating a sense of shared community. Community building requires a sense of presence, reciprocation, and listening. Multi-stakeholders can strengthen a shared sense of community by utilizing social media to encourage new ways of listening and responding.

New interactive forms of convening that combine popular social media tools with remote participation efforts and face-to-face meetings, can provide more channels for input and engage a broader public sphere. In order to reach its democratic potential, however, social media need to address various levels of participation and access, geographic specificity, linguistic diversity, privacy and security—autonomous spaces.

Conclusion

Social media can enhance “regime” building by creating and exercising social capital through relational ties in distributed networks and through normative issue framing and dissemination. Actual uses can highlight ways that social media can be integrated in existing institutional processes of Internet governance to ensure that more stakeholders have equal opportunity to participate in decision making. The Internet Governance Forum including the Secretariat, The Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group, Dynamic Coalitions, and remote participants can form more robust social networks that can enhance multi-stakeholder participation, collaboration, and transparency. If multi-stakeholderism proves a successful model for Internet governance, it can hold promise for not only the future of IGF, but also for public participation in other matters of common fate.

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Figure 1

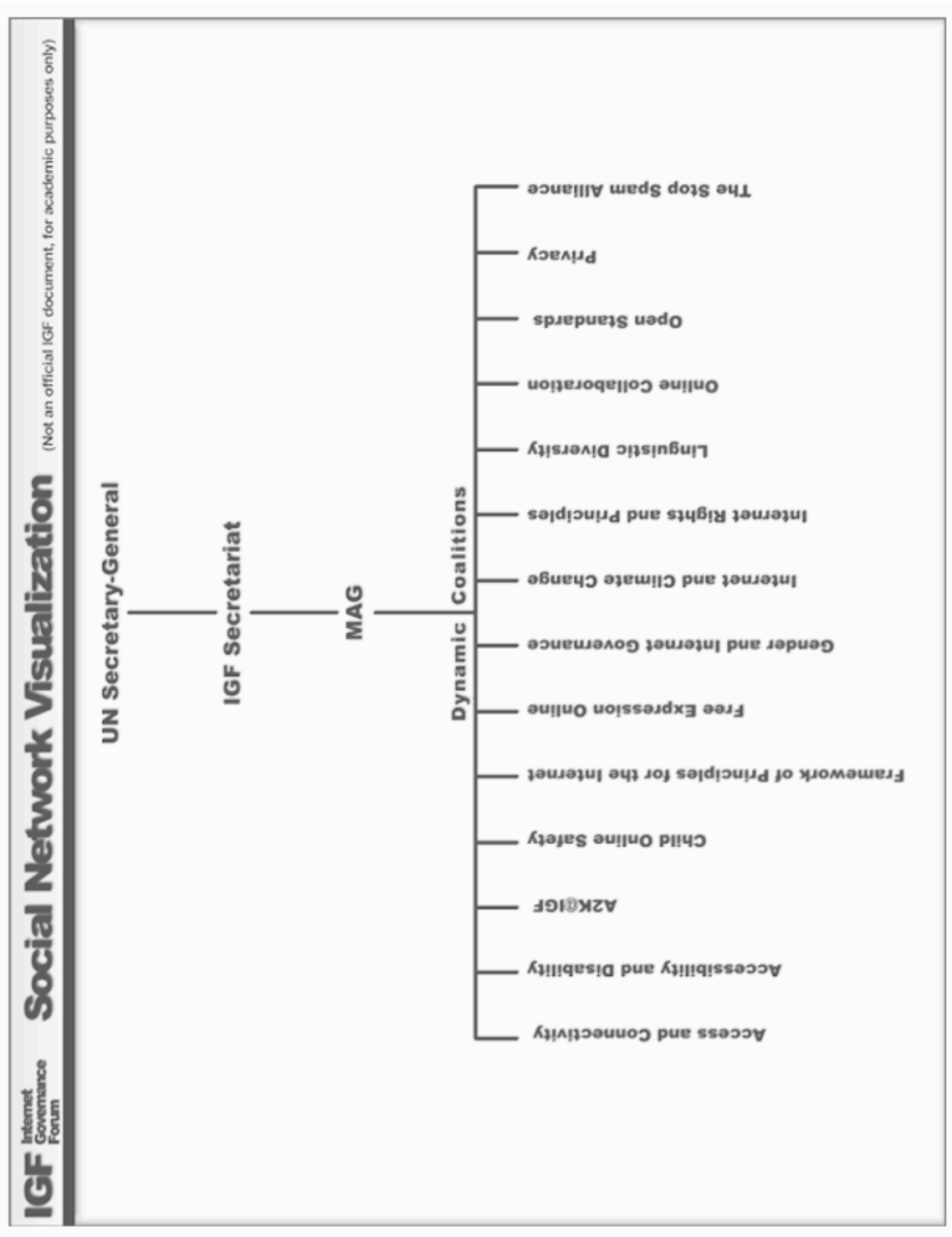


Figure 2

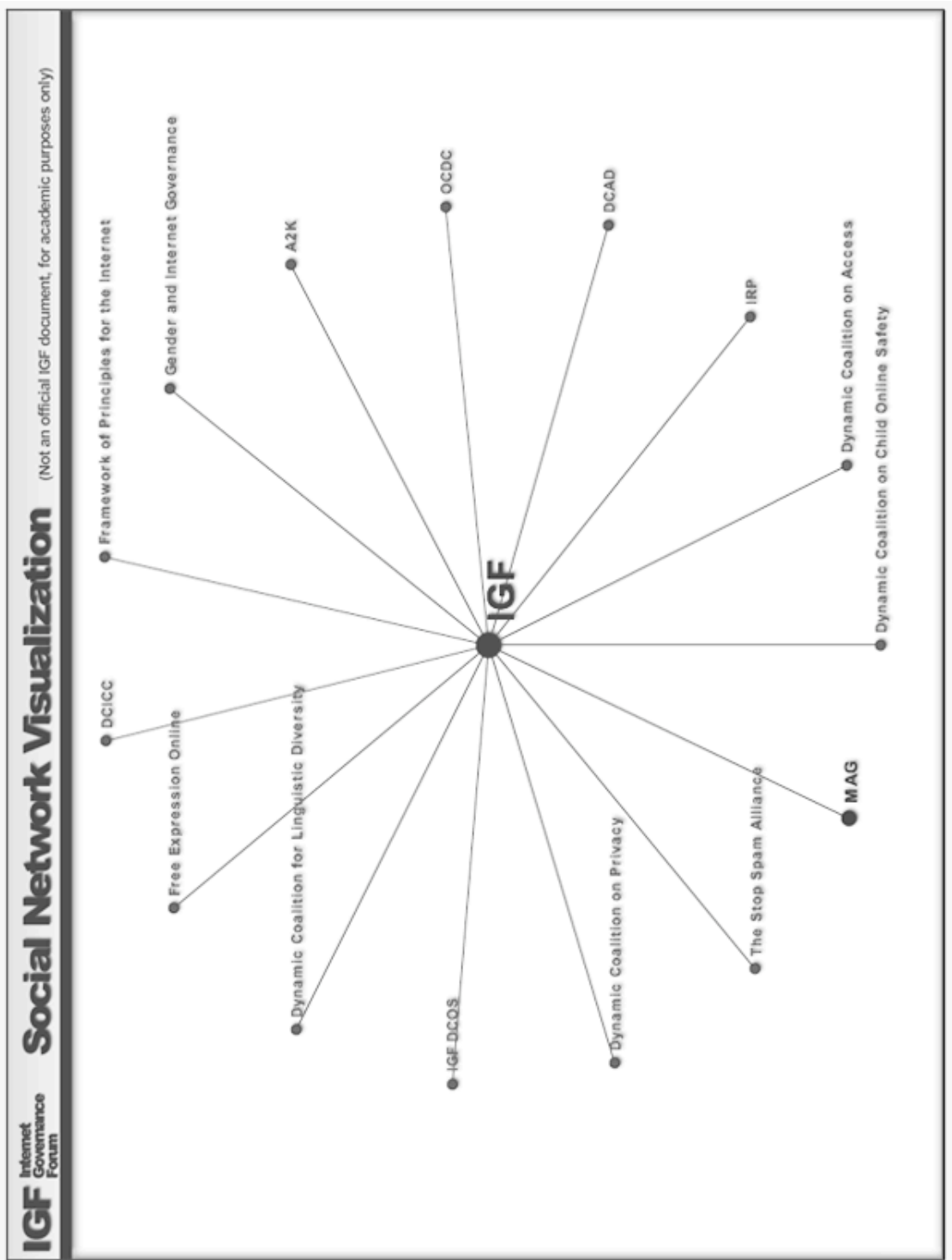
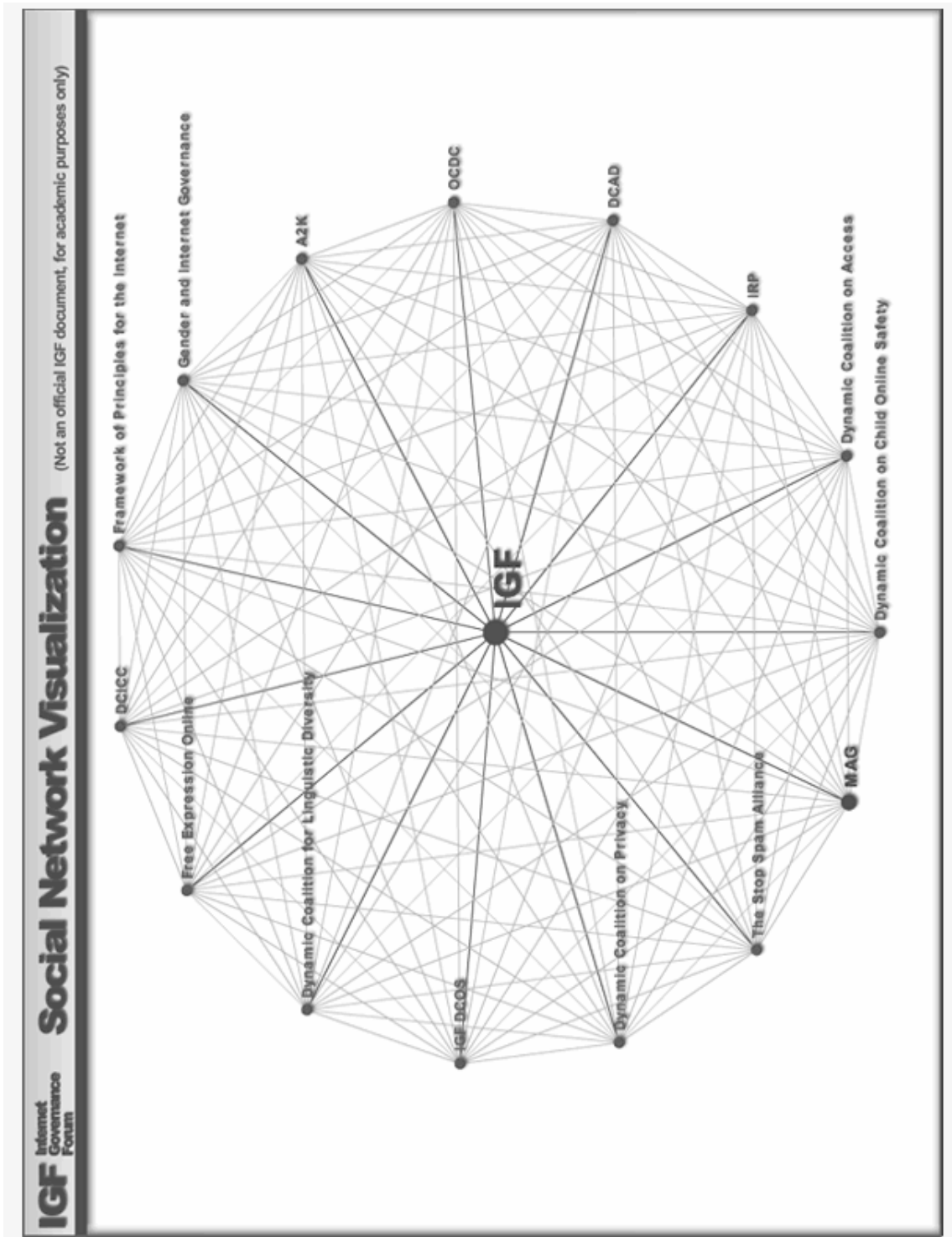


Figure 3



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