International Internet Governance
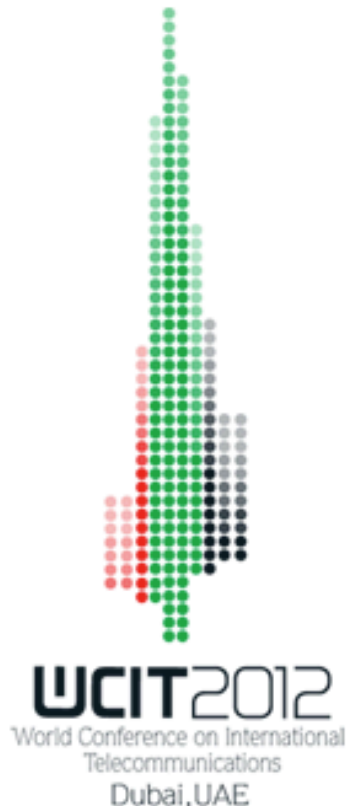
WCIT

World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12)

At the request of our membership, ITU will convene the **World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT)** in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 3-14 December 2012.

This landmark conference will review the current International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs), which serve as the binding global treaty outlining the principles which govern the way international voice, data and video traffic is handled, and which lay the foundation for ongoing innovation and market growth. The ITRs were last negotiated in Melbourne, Australia in 1988, and there is broad consensus that the text now needs to be updated to reflect the dramatically different information and communication technology (ICT) landscape of the 21st century.

Agendas	Participation	Documents

:: Agenda of WCIT-12
   (Council Resolution 1317)

WCIT2012
World Conference on International
Telecommunications
Dubai.UAE

Back in 1988

World Administrative Telegraph and Telephone Conference (WATTC)
- Produced a revision to the International Telecommunications Regulations
- Obligations of signatory governments with respect to international telecommunications services
- Actually it was all about inter-carrier telephony call settlements
- And by explicitly allowing asymmetric arrangements it was also about structural cross subsidies among a cosy club of public sector monopoly telephone operators (and AT&T) as a compatible extension to various other international developmental programs
- Codified existing practice and confirmed the telecommunications industry as the conduit for international developmental funding under the guise of inter-provider financial settlement payments

Now

- The ITRs are being reviewed by governments:

  - The ITRs should explicitly include the Internet
  - The ITRs should explicitly exclude the Internet

  - The ITRs should stipulate that the Internet should have inter-provider settlements imposed and enforced
  - The ITRs should not interfere in matters of world trade and commerce

  - The ITRs should be ignorable
  - The ITRs and the ITU-T recommendations should be mandatory and without exclusion provisions

Some views I've heard (in no particular order):

- The future of the Internet is being negotiated by governments behind closed doors
- World War 3.0 (Vanity Fair, May 2012)
    "There is a war underway for the control of the Internet"
- It is simply unacceptable that one nation state holds the entire keys to the global telecommunications network
- This is supremely irrelevant given that the Internet is a minimal communications platform fo a rich set of applications
- The ITU-T is an irrelevant anachronism in today's world

Some further views I've heard:

- This is now taking a series of trade wars and escalating this into cyber warfare
- We are privatizing the public space and emasculating governments and national jurisdictions in the process
- This is an asymmetric world where the rich economies are now indulging in techno-colonialism on poorer economies
- Content businesses are now spinning out of control and uniform regulatory controls are now necessary
- This is a matter of international trade and commerce
- Imposing structural cross-subsidies in a market-driven activity sector creates distortions and inefficiencies

And also, something to bear in mind:

- This is a uniquely wonderful and extremely brittle system
  - Its wonderful that one technology artefact has scaled from a span of tens to a span of billions
  - But its brittle in so far as when it breaks it will do so without warning and without the possibility of recovery

Your views?