

## **ALTERNATIVE INFORMATICS ASSOCIATION**

**#ungovForum**

### **WELCOME SPEECH**

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Internet Ungovernance Forum.

What started as an idea to have a party at the local hacker space, since all of our workshop proposals were rejected at IGF, has turned into something much bigger than we could have ever imagined. And, yet, things easily grow over our heads in Turkey, so this is nothing to be too surprised about.

We hope that these two days are good for stitching together some divides that work against us. And, no, we are not talking about digital divides and how with public private partnerships we will be able to “help the poor” without addressing any issues of social justice. We do not feel in place to talk about these divides that are misused to mobilize charity rather than political and economic change.

We want to talk about other divisions that make us blind to connections between events that affect us all. For example, in Turkey, there are direct connections between the murder of a journalist named Hrant Dink; a memorable demonstration against Internet censorship titled "sansure sansur"; a drone attack in Roboski, a little Kurdish town close to the Iraqi border; the Gezi protests; the rise of citizen journalism; corruption among the highest tiers of the current government; the purchase of DPI software from a Swedish company backed by the Swedish Royal Family; and child pornography.

Here is one set of connections and surely there are others. Thanks to the Snowden revelations and the Spiegel article about NSA's activities in Turkey, we now know that the drone trigger that massacred dozens in Roboski was pulled based on intelligence from the NSA. If it wasn't for the courageous journalists and their new colleagues, the citizen journalists, we would not have known and mobilized in protest of the dozens killed in Roboski. The frustrations of the masses with these events were some of the triggers of the Gezi Park protests. Gezi in return brought together environmental and urban activists with the internet activists that previously had organized "Sansure Sansur". The same networks of solidarity played a key role in disseminating information about government corruption, towards which the mainstream media remained silent. In response to the light shed on their dirty activities, the government presented us with draconian internet laws and are now forcing ISPs to integrate the Swedish DPI software. We are now told, in a country where violence towards women and children are systematically neglected, that DPIs will be put in place out of a concern for child pornography. Our government has also reached out to Silicon Valley, the result being that Facebook and Twitter are now censoring political activists and citizen journalists.

Turkey is not unique. There is a direct connection today between how states and corporations treat people and our natural resources; the discontent expressed across main squares of the world, and the struggles against surveillance and censorship. So we thought, we need a forum to discuss the divides that keep us from connecting the dots. Here is our initial list of divisions we felt the need to address:

Divide 1: We are long beyond the point where the online and offline distinction makes sense. "The internet" is not separate from the "real" world. The so called "smugglers" massacred in Roboski were not online, yet their tragedy is implicated in our struggles. It is not sufficient to demand only "digital human rights", we must simply demand fundamental rights and justice.

Divide 2: It is not reasonable to see the internet independent of other common infrastructures. We need to recognize that what information is to the internet activist, is the seed to the environmental activist, is the public space to the urban activist and so on. All of these movements are fighting against corporate monopolies and their governmental collaborators. It is in solidarity with these struggles that we can best reclaim our rights.

Divide 3: There is a serious division between those who develop technologies and those who do "internet policy". These people usually complain about each other. Let us complain about both. Even if activist minded, it is easy to fall into technocratic solutionism when fighting for policy change or developing disruptive technologies. Our question to you, what are you going to do to crack open your close knit networks with fancy vocabularies so that we can have an internet of the people?

So, these are some of the divides we struggled with as we put our forum together. It is likely that we do not live up to all our high thoughts and surely some of them are controversial. Nevertheless, we think it is important to share them with you. We hope that they are somewhat reflected in the program and that they will inform the debate.

We must also admit, many of you are new to us and many of us are new to you. This is what makes this forum even more exciting. We hope that this will be a forum in which we get to know each other, learn from each other and shape collective struggles. In order to do that, we especially ask our panelists to keep their presentations to less than 10 minutes, and we ask our participants to let them feel it, if they talk too long. We intended this forum for everyone who is here, so we ask you to take care that it will be this way in the coming two days.

Following in the steps of all of those who came before us; of all of you who are sitting here; and all of those who are not here but with whom we share struggles, let this be a forum to think of NEW beginnings, together, crossing divides for a future Internet with and for the people. Finally, in a world that is increasingly "governed" using data and statistics, we would like to end with a quote from Hannah Arendt: "The NEW always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability".

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