



IGF Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation

IAB presentation

Wednesday 03 May 2023

14:00 - 15:00 UTC

The **Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF)** is an IGF intersessional activity to further the discussion on and to raise awareness of the technical, policy, legal and regulatory measures and actions that pose a risk to the open, interconnected and interoperable Internet.

The **objectives of the PNIF** - over an envisaged 2 year timeframe - are to (a) Offer a systematic and comprehensive framework to define Internet fragmentation, its intended and unintended causes, and its potential effects; (b) Collect and analyze case studies to fine-tune and complement this framework; (c) Establish shared principles, recommendations or codes of conduct that prevent fragmentation and preserve the open, interconnected and interoperable nature of the Internet.

Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF) 2022 work

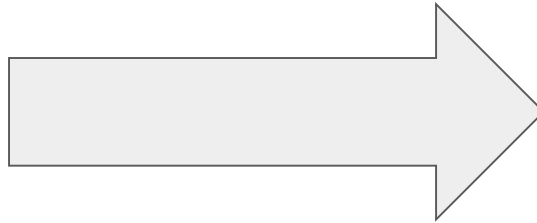
Webinar 1 'What does internet fragmentation meant to you?'

Webinar 2 'What can be done and who should be doing what?'

Working call drafting a PNIF framework

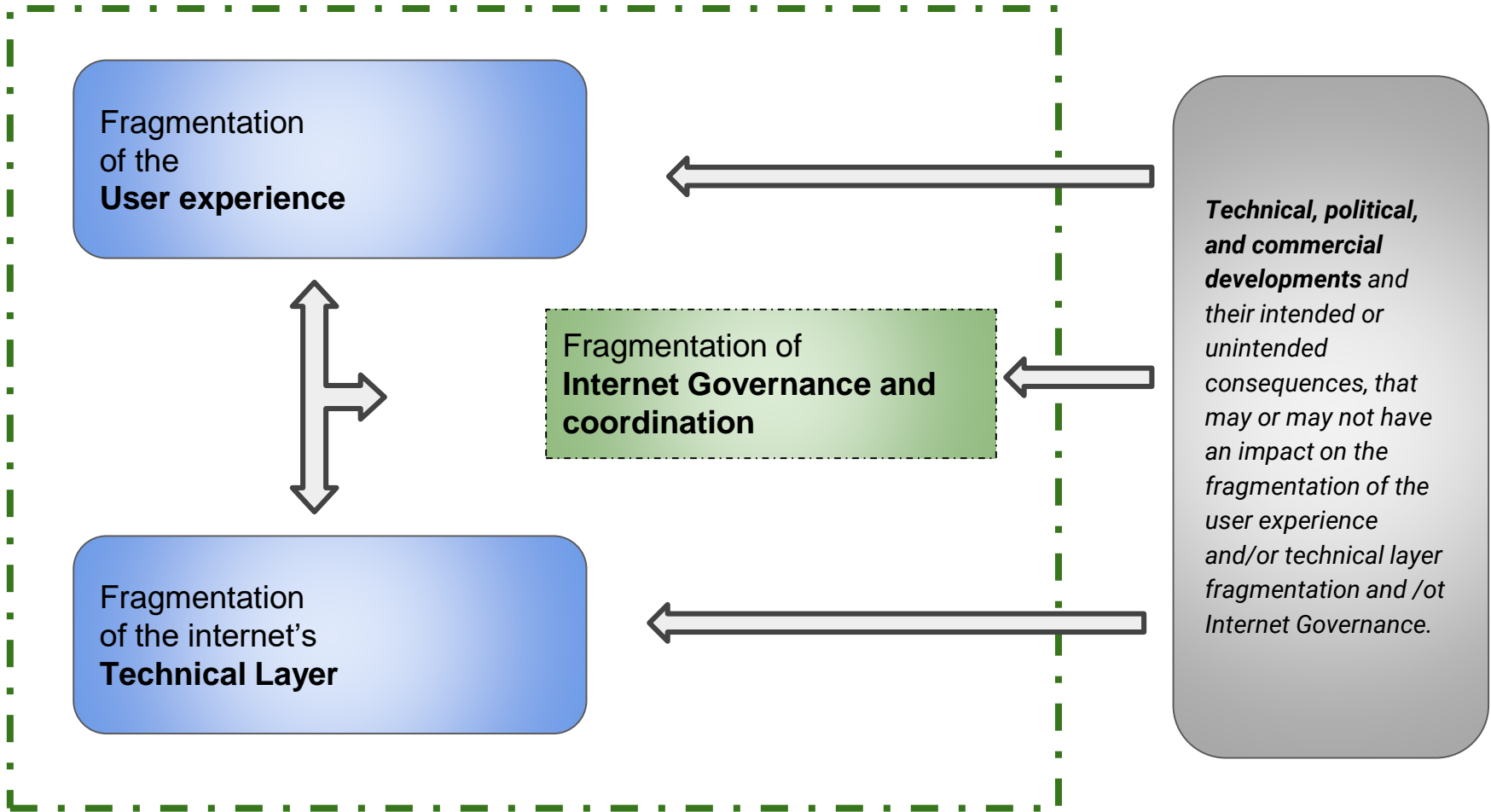
PNIF workshop @IGF 2022

PNIF survey



PNIF Framework
for
discussing
fragmentation

PNIF framework for discussing fragmentation



I. Fragmentation of the User Experience

Conceptualisation

Fragmentation that results in a different user experience of the Internet, depending on where one is accessing from (or not accessing).

Fragmentation with regard to the user experience can result from

- not having effective or affordable access* to infrastructure;
- interventions by states (e.g. blocking, shutdowns, censorship);
- or corporations (content control, walled gardens, etc.).

Potential overlap and links with other dimensions of fragmentation

- *Potential link with technical layer fragmentation* when a continued disruption of the access to the free flow of data (e.g. because of blocking or filtering) leads to creation of alternative and separate applications and services that constitute separate ecosystems not interoperable with the internet.

II. Fragmentation of the Internet's Technical layer

Conceptualisation

Fragmentation that challenges the interoperability of the internet

Fragmentation of the technical layer that makes the internet work caused by

- Interference with the public core* of the internet.
- The creation of 'national internets' limited within geographic borders;
- Routing of internet traffic via the private infrastructure by big tech companies.

(*the public core is not universally defined)

Reference framework to assess fragmentation

The interoperability of the global internet infrastructure.

Comments

- It is important to differentiate between the fragmentation that has a negative impact on the interoperability on the transport layer and existing decentralisation in the organisation of the internet infrastructure (e.g. related to the management of the IP address space or the Domain Name System).

III. Fragmentation of the Internet Governance and Coordination

Conceptualisation

Fragmentation of Internet Governance and Coordination that manifests through

- a changing commitment to the Multistakeholder management of the technical layer of the Internet;
- a lack of a global commitment and framework across multilateral and multistakeholder venues, governments and stakeholders to address global internet policy issues from a human rights and free flow of data perspective.

Potential impact on other dimensions of fragmentation

- Fragmentation of multistakeholder governance (i.e. competition or duplication between standards bodies like IETF or ETSI) can drive fragmentation at the technical layer (competing alternative protocols for transport security for example)

PNIF 2023 Objectives and work plan

1. **Unpack the PNIF framework via three parallel work streams** on *fragmentation of the user experience, fragmentation of the Internet's technical layer, and fragmentation of Internet governance and coordination.*

The work streams will work in an open and bottom-up manner to take a deep dive into the identification and prevention of fragmentation.

-> *IDENTIFICATION:*

Identify which types of fragmentation and related actions pose the highest risks and should be avoided

-> *PREVENTION :*

Define practices, guidelines, and principles to prevent or address fragmentation.

PNIF 2023 Objectives and work plan

- 2. The combined work of the three work streams will culminate in the PNIF 2023 outputs,** which are envisaged to include:
- A refined and robust framework for discussing fragmentation, to provide increased clarity and common understanding about the diverse causes of fragmentation, their interrelation , impacts, and when fragmentation is most harmful and should be avoided
 - Recommended high-level overarching principles to avoid Internet fragmentation (building on the 2022 framework), to feed into discussions between policymakers and stakeholders, in particular but not exclusively in the framework of Global Digital Compact (GDC) process.
 - Concrete guidance and solutions for stakeholders to address fragmentation, including alternative solutions for problematic policies and behaviour that might lead to harmful fragmentation

Next Steps

Thematic webinars

- **Fragmentation of the User experience**

Date tbc

- **Fragmentation of the Internet's Technical layer**

Date tbc

- **Fragmentation of Internet Governance and coordination**

Date tbc

PNIF webpage

www.intgovforum.org/en/content/policy-network-on-internet-fragmentation

PNIF mailing list

https://mail.intgovforum.org/mailman/listinfo/pnif_intgovforum.org