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Internet metrics, telecom and internet policy: highlights from the TPRC 2013

Blog Editor



The TPRC is the oldest and most influential continuous meeting on telecoms policy, always held in Washington, D.C. and nowadays subtitled the [“Conference on Communication, Information and Internet Policy”](#). Silvia Elaluf-Calderwood and Jonathan Liebenau of the LSE Tech team presented papers and reported on the conference on our [twitter account](#). In this post, they summarise the main debates.

Jonathan and Silvia’s paper: [“Metrics for Assessing Internet Business Models and Sustainability”](#) had a very good reception and a long discussion ensued on how to move ahead the on internet metrics for policy, strategy and regulation. Silvia’s second paper at the conference was also well received; it is a product of collaboration with Telenor: [“Regulatory Policies in Relation to Metrics and Data Collection for Measuring the Emergent Internet”](#). The LSE presence was deepened by the attendance of many friends of the NEF, including Clare Milne (LSE Media & Communications), Johannes Bauer (Michigan State), James Alleman (U. Colorado-Boulder), Barbara Cherry (Indiana), Eli Noam (Columbia), Lorenzo Pupillo (Telecom Italia), Edmond Baranes (Montpellier), Christopher Yoo (UPenn) and our collaborators from MIT: David Clark, Bill Lehr and Jesse Sowell. Geoffrey Myers from Ofcom and currently lecturing at the LSE Department of Media and Communications presented: “Spectrum Floors in the UK 4G auction: An Innovation in Regulatory Design”.

The emerging theme turned out to be “one size does not fit all”. Stress on the variety of solutions currently been tested for spectrum auctions and broadband with examples from Latin America and other parts of the world illustrated the case. The conference was split in five areas: internet policy, spectrum and mobile applications, competition and innovation, governance and media, IP, privacy and security, and there were more non-US cases presented than usual. In addition to a considerable number of papers addressing European and Asian themes, there were whole sessions devoted to Latin America and to international comparisons.

An unusual panel took place during the conference dinner on free speech in an electronic age on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Ithiel de Sola Pool’s [book](#) “Technologies of Freedom”. Pool was a forward thinking scholar and the occasion allowed many of us who were influenced by his writings the opportunity to reflect on his prognoses, which can be summarized by his phrase: “the norms that govern information and communication will be even more crucial than in the past”.

Special panels debated issues such as “intelligent mobile devices and their impact: perspectives, lessons issues and challenges”, “MOOCs and online learning: digital disruption in action?”, “impact of broadband adoption: evidence and new research directions for Latin America”, and an increasingly idiosyncratic US debate asking, “is common carriage still relevant?”. TPRC is a showcase of some of the top regulators, analysts, academic and institute researchers and commercial speakers in the telecoms and internet industry. Debates were very animated, since old friends and foes faced each other and the overall feeling was that now is time to move to action were both practitioners and theorists can consolidate the lessons of the past to address present challenges.

In the future there will be PhD student sessions and workshops, but this year TPRC held a poster session with examples research in progress: “the broadband business nexus”, “factors affecting application developers”, “loyalty to mobile platforms: business implications and regulatory concerns”, “moving toward web 2.0 enhanced E-government: a comparative case study of local governments in small town Pennsylvania”, “privacy and personal data protection in cyberspace: the Brazilian case”, “free wi-fi networks: a comparative study of the impact of policy and public-private collaboration on wireless broadband in the United States, South Korea and Finland”; “young people and mobile phone privacy in Canada: applying a model of digital policy literacy”; “A meta-analysis of second-order digital divide effects”; “do local public broadcasters serve the local communities? a comparative study of local public broadcasters in social network platforms” and “the impact of internet & telecommunication technologies on media and communication sectors in Egypt”.

The LSE team research papers continue work begun in 2011 and most recently presented at the University of Pennsylvania in June (see our previous [blog](#)). Further analysis from the programme will be presented in mid-October at the European International Telecommunications Society [ITS] [conference](#) in Florence and then at the annual [Workshop on Internet Economics](#) [WIE] to be held at the Cooperative Association for Internet Data Analysis [CAIDA] at the University of California, San Diego.

The themes of research are increasingly recognized to be relevant to the whole industry and our critical approach to commonly used internet metrics show how some are misleading, some inappropriate, and some useful only when considered in conjunction with new criteria of assessment. Much of the discussion of our work validated our efforts to continue requesting

jurisdictional information, evidence of systematic government fiscal policies and regulation, costing estimates, maintenance data, network qualities and other evidence relevant to any political economy analysis.

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This article gives the views of the authors, and not the position of the London School of Economics.

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