Towards a Global Network
of Internet and Society Centers

**A Symposium on Internet-Driven Developments:
Structural Changes and Tipping Points**

December 6-8, 2012

Final Report and Proposed Action Items

Introduction

On December 6-8, 2012, representatives from Internet and society research centers, selected guests, and collaborators from five continents and 22 countries came together in Cambridge, Massachusetts for a Symposium on Internet-Driven Developments: Structural Changes and Tipping Points. Collaboratively hosted by the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet & Society, the Centre for Internet and Society Bangalore, the Center for Technology & Society at the Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV) Law School, KEIO University SFC, the MIT Media Lab, the MIT Center for Civic Media, and the NEXA Center for Internet & Society at Politecnico di Torino, the meeting was also the inaugural event of a nascent global network of interdisciplinary centers with a focus on Internet and society. The gathering was made possible with the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

In addition to leveraging use cases and interdisciplinary lenses to explore how the Internet is promoting significant shifts in the information ecosystem, one of the gathering's key objectives was to surface and identify promising intersections and connection points among different participants. Building upon varied—and often overlapping—human networks, conversations sought to sustain and strengthen existing collaborations, contemplate and forge new connections, and consider the primary efforts that such a network could pursue. Initial thoughts included proposals for shared activities, research endeavors, human exchanges, and teaching initiatives. In addition to exploring substantive topics of mutual interest, participants also brainstormed ideas around network formation, including new formats for connection and collaboration, novel ways to assess and adapt comparative research methodologies, and exciting proposals for cooperative activities with medium and long-term impact.

This report provides a high-level overview of the action items put forth by participants over the course of the three days. Rich summaries of the substantive sessions, including

notes, photos, and other supporting materials, are available via shared Google docs, Storify, and other formats.[1] We welcome your contributions to this body of resources, with the hope that the group will not only work together to initiate first steps, but also collectively create spaces and build mechanisms through which to further explore and flesh out the longer term goals and future direction(s) of the network.

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[1] Please see Appendix 1 for a list of these materials, including links.

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I.   Reviewing Key Discussion Threads and Central Takeaways

1.   Themes and Topics: Surfacing Ideas for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Throughout the symposium, participants discussed a variety of potential research collaborations and discussed the value of the network's diversity in advancing both new and existing initiatives. They also highlighted broad topics that might benefit from the comparative global research opportunities that such a network could offer.

Broad Topics for (Potential) Network Exploration and Engagement

The opening discussion of common goals and shared objectives ("common means") put into relief a number of substantive areas that might catalyze particular projects in the near term. The list below summarizes a mix of broad conceptual domains that participants proposed in response to the question: "What are the questions, problems, technological endeavors, interventions or other collaborative activities you and your research institution are most excited about or find to be most pressing? And what will they help achieve?"[2]

- Information Communication and Media (New and Traditional)
- ICTs and Development
- Human Rights and Civil Rights
- Openness/Education
- Politics and Policy
- Multi-Stakeholder Model(s)

Existing Projects and Invitations to Collaborate

This section provides just a sampling of the many existing and proposed research initiatives and specific projects that surfaced during the meeting. Where possible, we have identified the participants who pitched the idea and used their language in summarizing it. The bolded terms represent broad themes and may offer starting points for further development.

With the understanding that this document might not capture the important takeaways from the many side conversations and brainstorming sessions that took place at the Symposium, we encourage participants to build upon, refine, or correct the issues outlined below (also captured in our shared resources) and to reach out to individuals who may be involved with a particular endeavor.[3]

- **Internet governance**
    - o Project on EU Strategy for Internet Policy and Governance (Andrea Glorioso, European Commission)
- **Political engagement**

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[2] For the full text of this discussion, please see: http://bit.ly/SCTPcommongoals.
[3] For a full list of project and research ideas that were generated during the Symposium, starting with our initial collective mapping exercise, please see: http://bit.ly/SCTPprojects.

- o Building a horizontal matching algorithm for voters during the European Elections of 2014 to facilitate political engagement among all citizens (Alex Trechsel, European University Institute)
- **Open Internet**
  - o **Open Science** Database to improve knowledge of existing research projects (Thomas Schildhauer, Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet & Society)
  - o Moving beyond legal and technical approaches to **open data**: The actual facts behind (and typology of) usage of open data and its impacts in policy making (Mayo Fuster Morell, Berkman Center for Internet & Society)
  - o **The Resilience of Cyberspace**. Can we assume an open, free, unfragmented cyberspace as a public good? What are the current challenges? What are the tools to preserve the open Internet? (Daniel Stauffacher, ICT4Peace)
- **Social Innovation**
  - o Explore the European Commission's interest in the field of **social innovation**, with a particular focus on access— to technology, informal education, and health (Mayo Fuster Morell, Berkman Center for Internet & Society)
- **Legal infrastructure / intermediaries / liability**
  - o Looking at the legal infrastructure to facilitate intermediary (IM) discourse online, and how liability questions affect infrastructure (Joris van Hoboken, IViR Amsterdam)
- **Internet Health Organization**
  - o Working together to document and improve the Internet's health, including both the network and the nodes it connects, in order to leverage collective work and influences towards encouraging a more open and transparent Internet. The focus will be on how organizations that already collect and distribute data on the Internet's situational awareness can best collaborate with, learn from, and inspire each other, in order to foster an ecosystem that supports data openness and sharing among all participants. (Jonathan Zittrain, Berkman Center for Internet & Society)
- **Internet Economy**
  - o Promoting forward-looking, bilateral discussions regarding the transnational Internet economy, particularly in the U.S.-Japan context and with a focus on TPP negotiations, as well as more robust conversations on this topic within individual countries (Jim Foster, Keio University)
- **Global Privacy Governance**:
  - o Considering how to approach challenges more effectively than via protectionism, which would lead to "zonation" that could close doors for Internet, and which would carry tremendous negative consequences for important innovations, like cloud computing (Ingolf Pernice, Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet & Society)

- **"Charter nodes**:" How to look at standard bodies of law and create **model jurisdictions** with laws that bolster facilitate high-quality networks, with regulations crafted so as to be ideally suited to a particular area and to reflect **shared values** such as reciprocity, innovation, and fairness in applying damages. (Nick Grossman, MIT Center for Civic Media)
- "Whose Change Is It Anyway?" **Futures, Youth, Technology And Citizen Action** In The Global South (And The Rest Of The World) (Nishant Shah, Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore) Challenges and opportunities in using **ICTs for crisis information management** and peace-building efforts.

2.   Approaches, Mechanisms, and Techniques: Fostering Near-Term Collaboration

Throughout the symposium, participants shared experiences and ideas regarding event formats, innovative modes of collaboration, and tools to facilitate (transnational) participation.[4] Individuals proposed a range of modes and models as potential means to foster near-term collaboration and to connect people with similar or overlapping topical interests and research approaches. Participants also emphasized the importance of in-person meetings as a critical way to understand the substantive areas on which different centers are working.

2.1   Mapping

Mapping the Field

As suggested during the Reflection session conducted by Ethan Zuckerman of the MIT Center for Civic Media, initial (and diverse) mapping efforts might help participants to better understand who is conducting what kinds of work in which areas.[5] To this end, some preliminary mapping might focus on scoping out, at a meta-level, research and scholarly activity of organizations and institutions involved in the network to better understand the state of play, which might in turn inform next steps for collaboration. Participants might complement this effort by working together to develop a shared yet flexible vocabulary or taxonomy for the issues on which they are working, aiming to account for and reflect cultural, geographic, disciplinary and other distinctions.

Mapping People and Projects

In addition to efforts to better conceptualize the state of the field, mapping efforts might also account for the projects and areas of expertise of individuals who participate in the network. The fruits of such efforts might indeed prove instrumental in developing the dynamic human layer of the network, by visualizing the network's terrain at a granular level and evolving over time.

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[4] For complete notes from the Friday afternoon break-out session dedicated to the topic of Formats, please see: http://bit.ly/SCTPformats.

[5] For an updated version of Ethan Zuckerman's slides, edited to reflect participants' inputs, please see: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/node/8121

2.2   Strengthening the Human Layer

Face-to-Face Meetings

Along with mapping exercises and other activities that might be undertaken asynchronously, participants underscored the role of in-person forums to identify and explore matches in research topics and methodologies, share ideas, set agendas, and build research relationships. Individuals stressed the importance of implementing both online and offline opportunities not only to surface these commonalities, but also to build relationships and conduct research together. A large yearly meeting of this group (and other potential collaborators) is a great starting point and participants also expressed interest in additional gatherings. Particularly given the geographic diversity of participants, many individuals were enthusiastic about "piggybacking" on other conferences and meetings to provide opportunities for various subgroups to come together and hone ideas for broader network engagement.

Person-to-Person Match-Making

As suggested in the mapping section (2.1), the belief that strong comparative research requires a clear sense of who is working on which issues was a repeated theme throughout the gathering. To obtain a clearer picture of who is involved in the network, participants reiterated the need for ways to facilitate new connections both inside of and beyond the network, focusing on opportunities for collaboration within and across disciplines and countries. One such intervention might be to convene a group of "connectors", perhaps as a working group, who possess a wide range of contacts across many geographies, research areas, and methodologies. In this model, these connectors would serve as matchmakers, helping individuals to identify others with whom they might collaborate. Other proposed models include discussion lists, surveys, and maps that invite participants to locate themselves and their research within a particular substantive zone in order to better connect with others interested in similar domains.

Extended Exchanges: Teaching, Fellowships, and other Models

Many participants underscored that an invaluable (offline) model to strengthen collaborations, foster new connections, and identify tools to work together involves providing opportunities for individuals to spend extended periods of time as guests of different institutions. Some pointed out the value of in-person contact to better understand different cultures, professional norms, communications styles, and other organizational attributes, an appreciation of which might help to sustain collaboration over time. Preliminary ideas for next steps in this cluster of activities include joint fellowship exchanges and guest teaching engagements as well as student, staff, and intern visits, in addition to other innovative exchange models. One such model for teaching is described in section II.2.

Communications and Information Sharing

To facilitate both on- and off-line person-to-person connections, individuals also stressed the need for robust and effective (online) communication channels. Specific ideas included the development of new forums, such as listservs and other electronic mailing lists, that both allow participants to share updates on research, project developments, and job opportunities and also provide spaces for participants to share ideas. Others proposed that the network might build from existing tools for communication and collaboration, such as Researchgate, the CyberProf listserv, and others.

II.   Charting the Path Forward for the Network

1.   Organizational Strategies and Structures: Staking Out Possible Network Models

A repeated strain of conversations, particularly towards the end of the Symposium, was around the need for organizational strategies and structures to foster ongoing collaboration among the nodes in the network. Building from specific ideas raised by participants, the sections below outlines some ideas that might contribute to the development of the network at an institutional level.

Thematically-Based Working Groups

Some participants were eager to create working groups based around key areas, which might include, among others, (1) taxonomies and mapping, (2) research tools and methodologies, (3) funding models, and (4) communication and collaboration tools.

Steering Committee

Participants seemed to agree that even a decentralized and highly participatory network would benefit from leadership. Therefore, another strategic option might be to build a steering committee to help drive the agenda for the network as well as to outline long-term priorities and goals. Various individuals suggested that the co-hosts continue to play such a role.

Non-Institutionalized Task Force

Other participants proposed a non-institutionalized task force, which might be particularly apt to sustain collaboration that is not exclusively tethered to academia.

2.   Developing the Vision of the Network

Beyond Projects

The final session of the Symposium invited reflections on the potential impact of the network, both in the short term and over time. Participants highlighted a number of anticipated research benefits, including sharing data and pooling existing work and research tools to strengthen existing collaborations and create new synergies; leveraging and combining diverse perspectives, disciplines, and cultures to add depth and nuance to projects and developing initiatives; facilitating comparative research and experiments across diverse environments and contexts; expanding capacity by joining forces and learning from one another; stimulating innovation via exposure to new ideas and approaches; and pursuing new channels for funding based on a collective model of scholarship.

Recognizing that important collaborations are underway in many cases, and will continue to grow, many participants also advanced a broader objective: pushing the identity and mission of the network beyond concrete projects and research opportunities. On this front, the network might aim to broker global conversations about the hard problems and questions that characterize the field of Internet and society, broadly defined. Such an enterprise would seek to create friendly, open, and trusting spaces that rest on the academic values of mutual learning, quality debate, information sharing, open exchange, and tolerance for a diversity of ideas. The end goal would be a "globalization" of universities beyond the traditional roles of education and research; rather, they would add important value to complex scholarly, policy, and mainstream debates about critical Internet and society issues, while also educating various stakeholders and the public at large.

A Shared Curriculum and Potential Teaching Effort

A first step towards creating such a space might take the form of a shared curriculum and associated teaching event(s). Such an effort could marry the online and offline connections of the network: participants could create a unique curriculum, curated—and potentially deployed—on an online platform, and then convene in-person to teach the course. Many network contributors could produce the curriculum, which might feature a rotating lead and topical focus across different iterations of the course. The human connections forged by co-teaching a multi-day course in different locations, with leadership moving across institutions from year to year, would be an invaluable opportunity for faculty, researchers, and other collaborators to create a space for exchange, debate, and learning about the issues they are most passionate about.

Appendix 1

Resources Generated during the Symposium

The following notes and materials were generated in an effort to capture participants' input and lay a foundation for further conversations and collaborations. In line with the broader objective of fostering communications among participants from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, the majority of these items are accessible to attendees; collaboration on these documents was—and continues to be—encouraged. An overview of sessions coupled with a summary of associated resources follows, with links to or attachments of these items provided. Any items that were not open for public editing during the meeting are noted as such in the text below.

I.   Session Notes and Associated Materials:

1.)   **Collaborative Mapping Exercise** [Opening Session, Thursday December 6th]

During this portion of the opening session, participants began to highlight the questions, problems, technological endeavors, interventions, or other collaborative activities that they and others at their research institution are most excited about or find to be most pressing.

View the notes from part one of our discussion, Common Goals:
http://bit.ly/SCTPcommongoals.

The second portion focused on possible ways to move from conversation to sustained collaboration. Participants started to explore the approaches, tools, structures, strategies, technologies, venues, and resources that are necessary to realistically make meaningful, joint progress towards realizing shared aspirations.

View the notes from part two of our discussion, Common Means:
http://bit.ly/SCTPcommonmeans.

This session was also captured on Storify: http://storify.com/berkmancenter/sctp-collaborative-mapping-session

2.) The first foundational session, *Tectonic Shifts: Understanding Structural Changes, Tipping Points, and their Effects on Systems*, was documented on Storify:
http://storify.com/berkmancenter/foundational-session-1-tectonic-shifts

3.) The second day began with a Welcome Address by Harvard Law School Dean Martha Minow and opening remarks by Harvard Law School Professor and Berkman Center Chair Terry Fisher on the relationship between IT and global justice. Next, Harvard Law School Professor and Berkman Center Co-Founder Jonathan Zittrain presented on dichotomies between owned / unowned and zoned / unzoned territories, domains, and ideas, setting the stage for the second foundational session, Forces of Change, in which a

panel of speakers explored data, algorithms, and intermediaries as key components of the digital ecosystem: http://storify.com/berkmancenter/use-case-1-political-participation-new-orders-demo

4.) **Breakout Sessions** [Morning Session, Friday, December 7th]
Semi-moderated sessions occurred around three axes of interest expressed by participants in advance of the meeting: projects, methods, and formats. The notes for these sessions were not open for public editing during the meeting.

- *View the notes from Breakout 1: Projects:* http://bit.ly/SCTPprojects
- *View the notes from Breakout 2: Methods:* http://bit.ly/SCTPmethods
- *View the notes from Breakout 3: Formats:* http://bit.ly/SCTPformats

5.) **Reflections** [Closing Session, Friday, December 7th]

Before adjourning for drinks and dinner, Center for Civic Media Director Ethan Zuckerman (MIT Media Lab) led an interactive session during which participants offered brief reflections and key takeaway points. This PowerPoint was not accessible for public editing during the meeting; however, an updated version of the presentation Ethan delivered, which has been edited to incorporate the notes taken live during the event, is available in Appendix 2. This session, along with the rest of the afternoon, was also live-blogged via Storify: http://storify.com/berkmancenter/sctpberkman-day-2-afternoon.

II. Social Media:

A variety of social media-focused activities occurred in tandem with the Symposium. To explore social media and multimedia offerings, participants may wish to:

1) Track discussion of the symposium on Twitter by searching for posts with the hashtag #SCTPberkman or visit the archive at http://tagteam.harvard.edu/hubs/24/hub_feeds/1858

2) View photos from the event on the Berkman Center's Flickr page:
- Day 1: http://www.flickr.com/photos/berkmancenter/sets/72157632211966541/
- Day 2: http://www.flickr.com/photos/berkmancenter/sets/72157632270258706/