



A Political Basis for Digital Inclusion

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Information Society Project

Memes, Genes, and Bits

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Political Implications of ICT Standardization

Political Authorization
and Representation

- Electronic Voting
- Voter Registration

Conditions Relevant to
Democracy

- Electronic Government Documents
- Cultural Innovation
- Discursive Spheres

Substantive
Political Issues

- Global Trade
- Speech
- Property Rights
- National Security
- Disaster Response



Representation in ICT Standardization

Because a technical specification can establish policy about issues of political importance, the character of the processes resulting in its formulation are highly relevant.

- Who may participate in the decision-making process?
- When must a decision-making institution be directly responsive to its polity's participation and input and when may it act in a representative capacity?
- What procedures constitute adequate participation, accountability, and transparency in a given decisional context?
- What are the duties of public authorities with regard to equalizing the resources and capacities of different parties to participate in decision-making?



Pronounced Effects of Standards Openness on Developing Countries (as Developers)

- IPR Conditions More Complicated Than Ever
 - TCP/IP standards only a small fraction of Internet standards
 - Multimedia applications; Internet device diversity
 - A single device can integrate hundreds of standards (and patents)
 - IPR policies vary among SSOs
 - Lack of IPR disclosure
- Creates Additional Challenges for Developing Countries
 - Typically later market entrants
 - May lack enormous legal staffs required to navigate IPR
 - May lack patent portfolios and cross-licensing agreements
 - Not as culturally well-versed and experienced in SSOs
 - Lack history of cross-licensing agreements



Pronounced Effects of Standards Openness on Developing Countries (as Users)

- Political Effects
 - If developing countries are not involved in standards-setting, their interests are not reflected in standards that establish public policy.
- Access to Scarce Resources
 - Standards also have economic and distributive justice effects when they create finite resources required for Internet use.
- Higher Costs
 - As users, countries with less of an installed base have a heightened IPR burden.
- Lack of Choice to “Opt Out”
 - The network effects and conservative momentum of standards often compel developing countries to use a standard to participate in the global economy.



Recommendations for Promoting More Balanced Representation in ICT Standards

Open Development

- Open Membership
- IPR Disclosure
- Procedural Transparency
- Due Process

Open Implementation

- Public Document Availability
- No Charge for Standard
- Favor standards with minimal underlying intellectual property restrictions.

Open Usage

- Government procurement policies should favor open standards, when possible.

