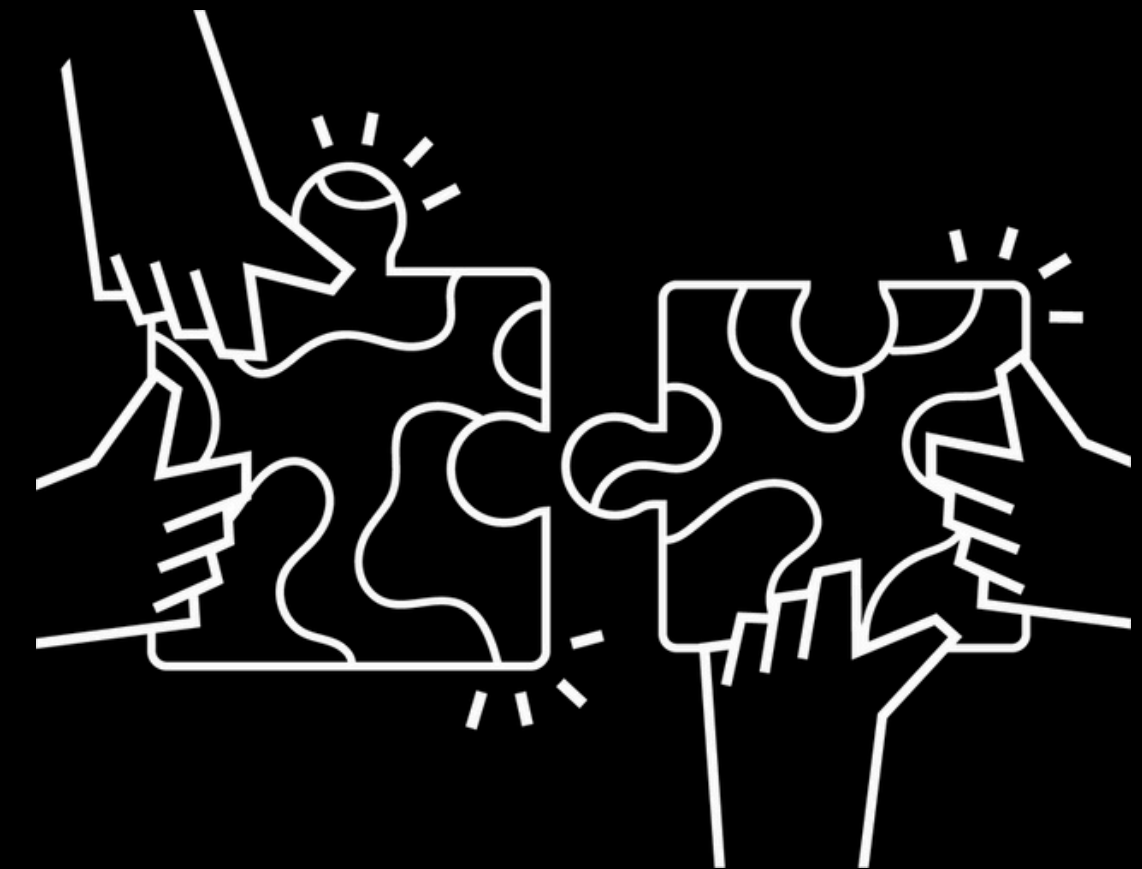


UM Global Citizenship Education Symposium

Digital Rights & Responsibilities

Sophia Tawonga Longwe
Maastricht | January 13, 2026



Ice Breaker

- What is your favorite Wikipedia article?
- Have you ever edited a Wiki project?
- Are you planning to contribute?



Structure

1. Wikimedia
2. Rights
3. Responsibilities
4. What is happening globally?
5. Digital Citizenship
6. What can you do?



01

What is Wikimedia?



Wikimedia DE

- Supporting organization for the German Wikipedia
- 113.000 members
- 180 employees

- Supporting volunteers
- Collaborating with institutions
- Political advocacy



Wikipedia

- How does Wikipedia work?



Flowchart by Wikimedia Europe

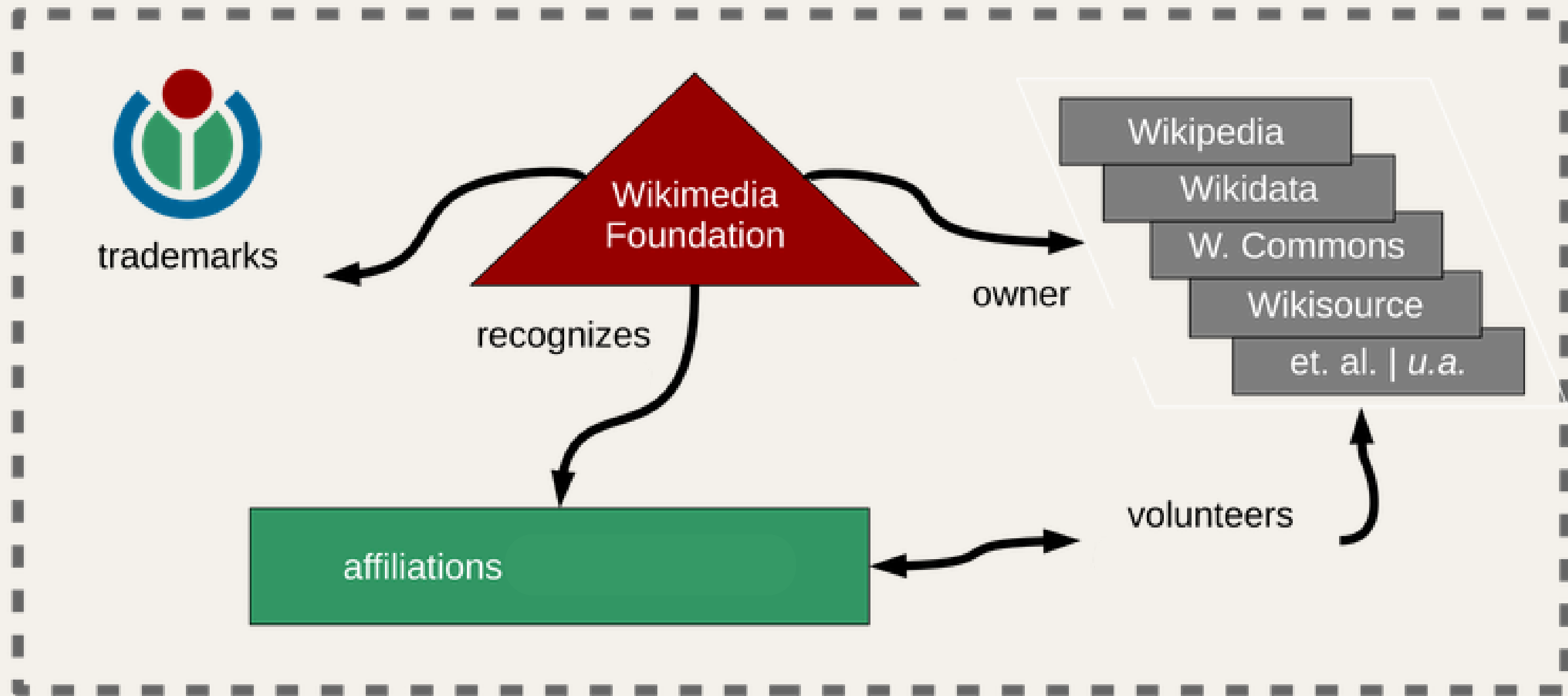


Wikipedia

- Largest encyclopedia of human history
- The only site in the top 50 that is not profit-oriented
- Collaboratively edited: approximately 260,000 active volunteers worldwide
- Multilingual (more than 300 languages)
- Free (access & sharing)
- No advertising & no tracking of people, no sales of data or algorithmic amplification

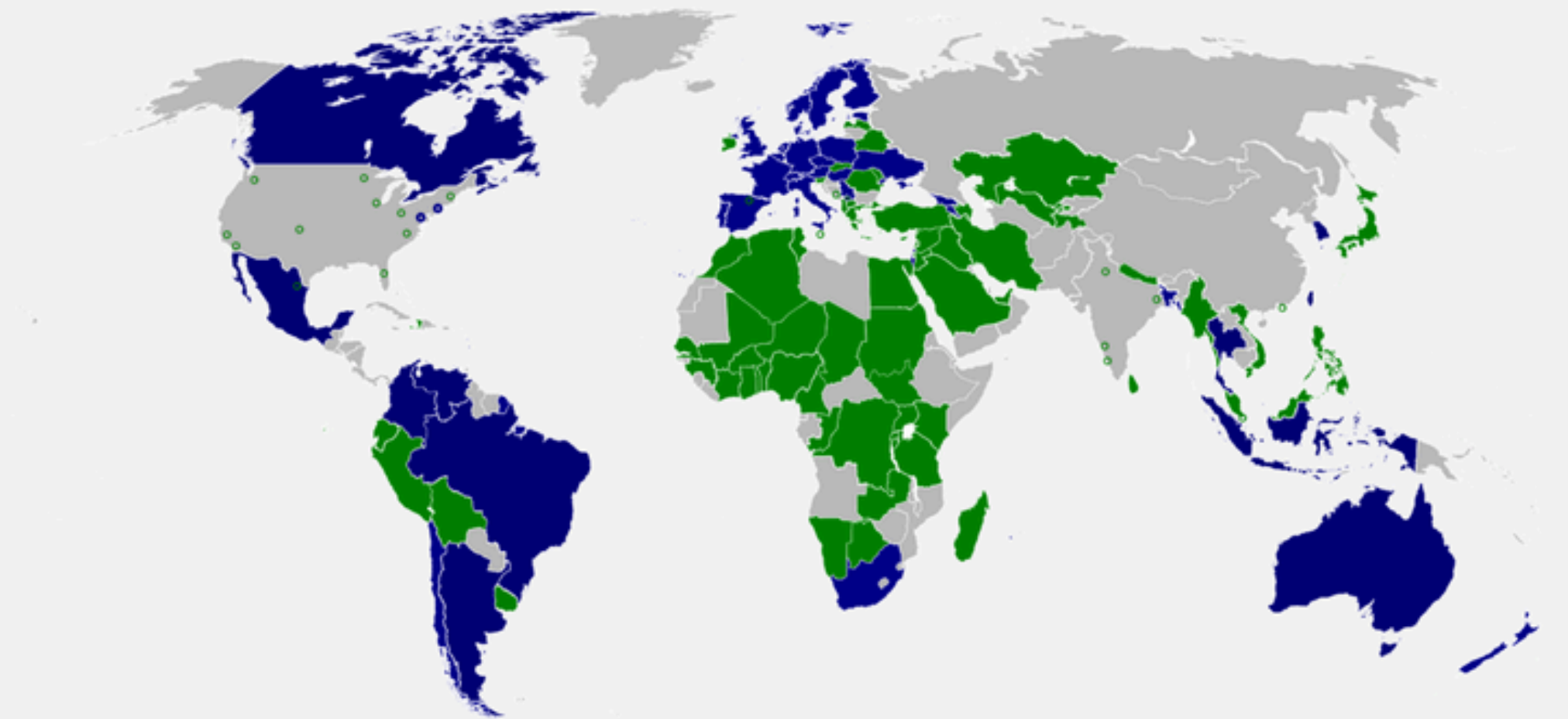


Wikimedia Foundation



Wikimedia Movement

Map of geographic based affiliates



As of 24 July 2025

■ Wikimedia chapters (blue)

■ Wikimedia user groups with a geographic focus (green)

02 Rights (& EU law)



Digital Services Act

- Wikipedia: designated a Very Large Online Platform (VLOP) under the DSA
 - only not-for-profit with VLOP status
- Implementation ongoing: secondary rules (researcher access, fees, decision database, child protection); revision planned for 2027
- US-EU tensions: DSA is on the transatlantic negotiation table



US sanctions former EU commissioner and four Europeans over efforts to curb online hate speech

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio named British, French and German citizens involved in efforts to curb the spread of disinformation are targeted by the visa ban.

 POLITICO / Dec 24, 2025



Federal Government: US sanctions against HateAid unacceptable

Criticism of entry bans imposed on managing directors of organisation that combat online hate

 deutschland.de / Dec 27, 2025

Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

- Lawsuits that are not initiated to assert a right, but to intimidate and silence critics
- Plaintiffs abuse their position and power
- restrict the exercise of freedom of expression of journalists, activists, whistleblowers, ...

→ EU anti-SLAPP monitor and directive & Democracy Shield



Wikimedia Foundation secures crucial legal win in France

On 19 September 2025, the Wikimedia Foundation won an important case at the Paris Civil Court, marking a victory for freedom of expression and for everyone who contributes to Wikimedia projects. Th...

 Diff / Dec 1, 2025

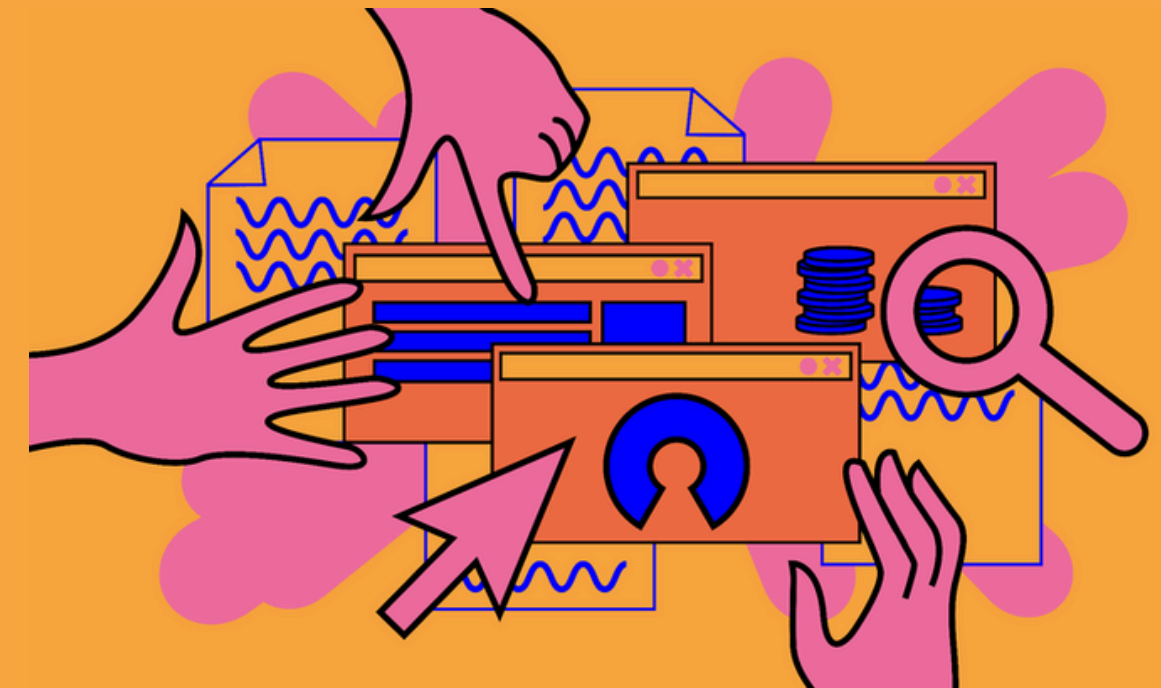
Digital Omnibus(es)

- Packages aim to simplify EU digital rules — de facto deregulation
 - Proposed easing of obligations on cookies, data acquis, and parts of the AI Act
- Open Data policies
 - undermining public-interest data governance
- GDPR targeted as a regulatory burden



<https://edri.org/our-work/edri-gram-27-november-2025/>

03 (Historical) responsibilities



Digital/Data Colonialism

- Colonial influences on knowledge in catalogs, databases, and open platforms
- Couldry and Mejias (2020) refer to the lack of control of users as data colonialism
- Are all users colonized or all tech companies/states colonizers?



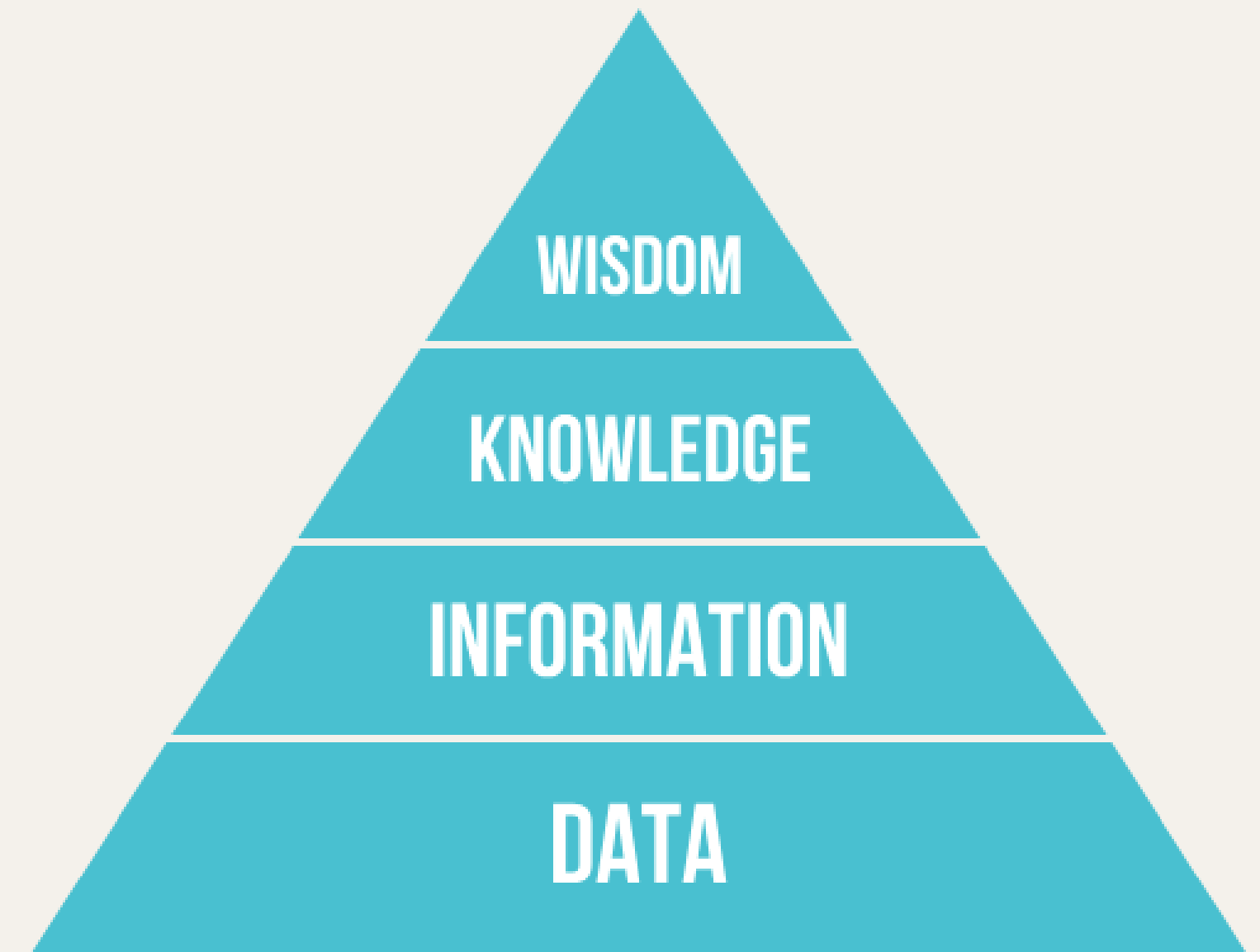
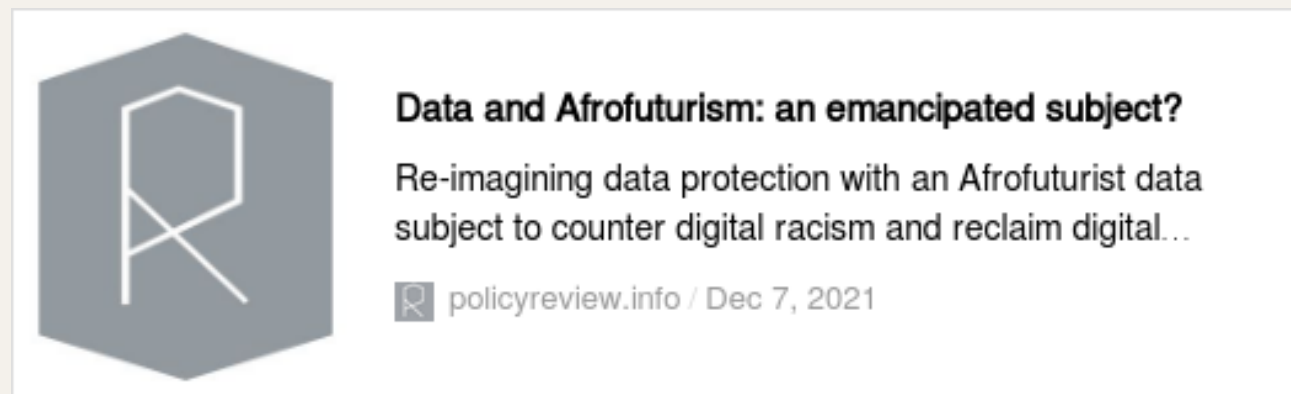
Colonial Looting of African Art: A Century in Exile

Colonial looting deprived African nations of most of their artistic treasures. Now they want them back. But it's easier to be said than done.

 DailyArt Magazine / Feb 26, 2024

Data Object vs Data Subject

- *Data is not neutral!*
- Discrimination leads to a doubled objectification of the data subject.
- Contextual, collective, and (radically) subjective approaches can lead to emancipated and liberated data subjects (Kadiri, 2021)



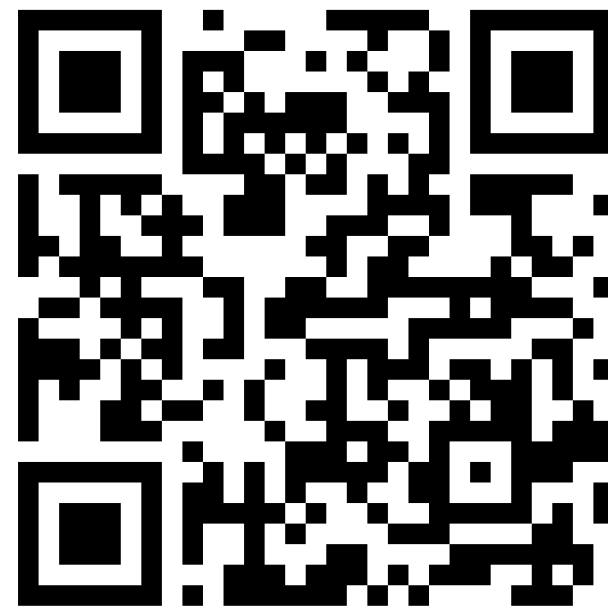
CC BY-SA 4.0, [Longlivetheux](#)

Digital injustice(s)

- Who owns the infrastructure like data centers, submarine cables and satellites?

→ Replicating colonial and patriarchal models of hierarchy.

THE COSMOLOGY OF
INTERNET
INFRASTRUCTURE
BY ESTHER MWEMWA
(RE:PUBLICA 25)



UNKNOWN AUTHOR,
([HTTPS://COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG/WIKI/FILE:1901_EASTERN_TELEGRAPH_CABLES.PNG#MW-JUMP-TO-LICENSE](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1901_EASTERN_TELEGRAPH_CABLES.PNG#MW-JUMP-TO-LICENSE)),
"1901 EASTERN TELEGRAPH CABLES", PUBLIC DOMAIN

Break



04

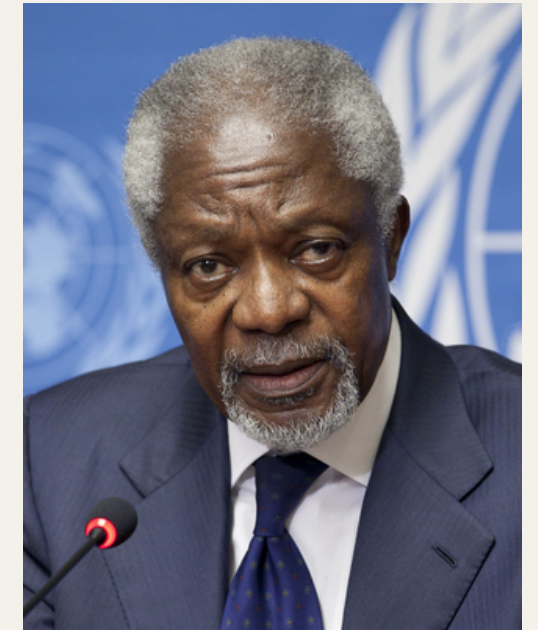
What is happening globally?



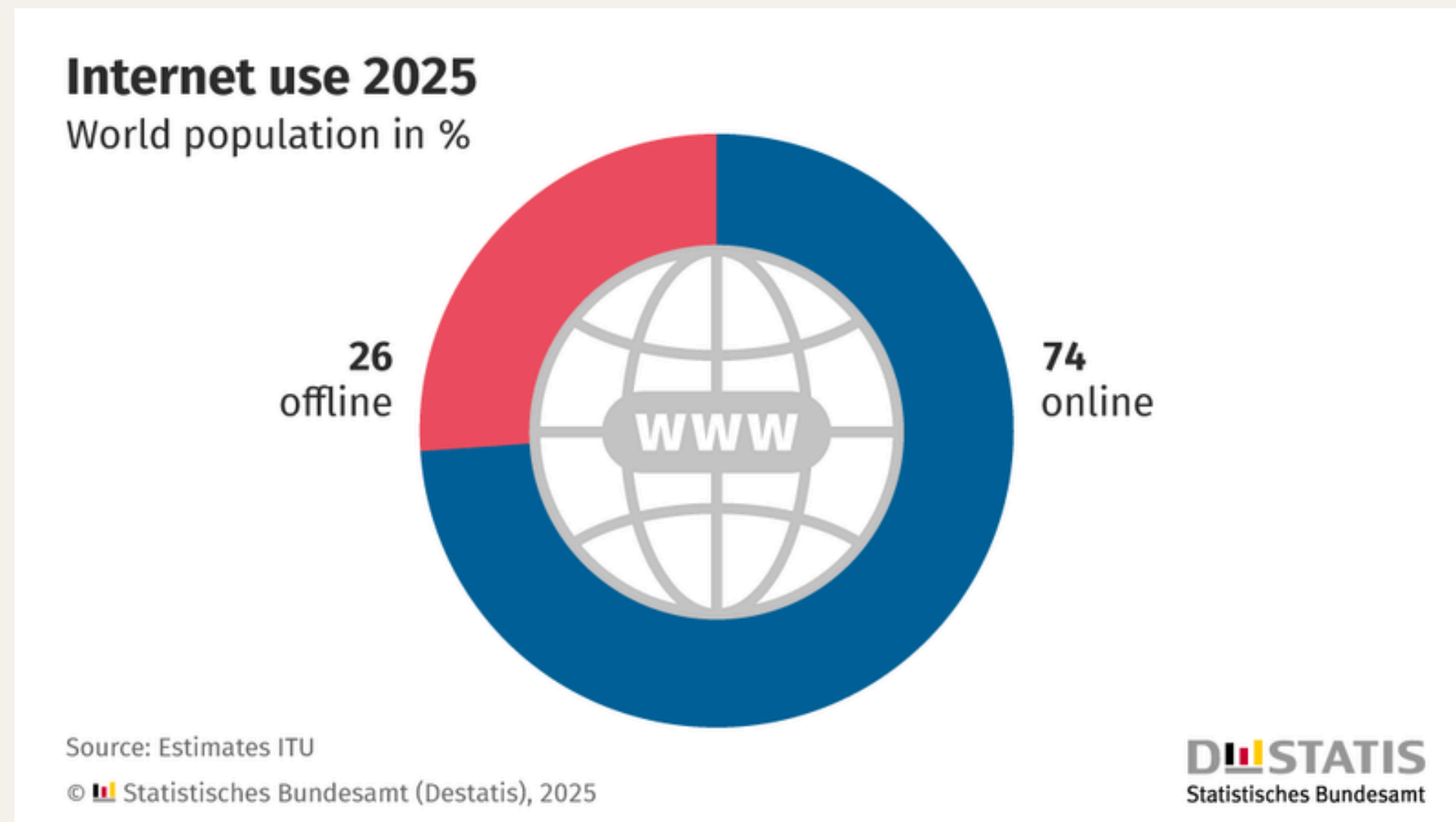
Digital divide(s)

“We need to develop inclusive and participatory models of governance. The medium must be made accessible and responsive to the needs of all the world’s people.”

Kofi Annan (2004)

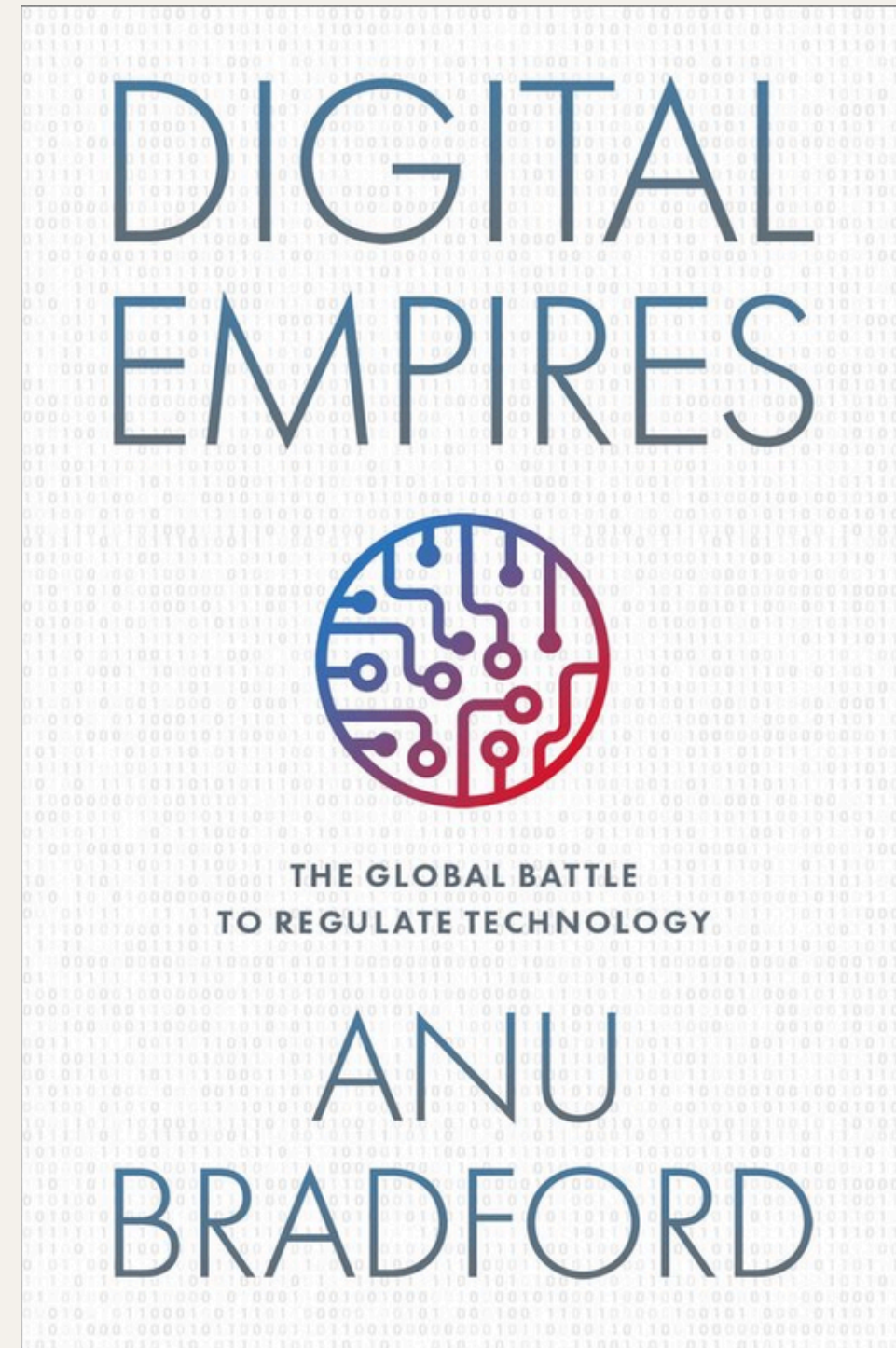


US Mission in Geneva
([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kofi_Annan_2012_\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kofi_Annan_2012_(cropped).jpg)), Kofi Annan 2012,
Public Domain



Approaches to digitalization

- US: Market driven
- China: State driven
- EU: Regulatory driven
 - Brussels effect (Bradford, 2020)
- What about the global majority?



The Internet is political.

“We cannot assume that the Internet will evolve automatically in a direction that is going to be compatible with democracy. It depends on how the technology is structured, governed, and used. Governments and corporations are working actively to shape the Internet to fit their own needs.”

Rebecca MacKinnon (2012)

Do we need digital sovereignty?

- What should we do about all of the dependencies?
- Can sovereignty go together with global citizenship?
- What is digital citizenship in this geopolitical context?



05 What is digital citizenship?



Digital Sovereignty vs Global Citizenship

 **Simon Wardley**
@swardley

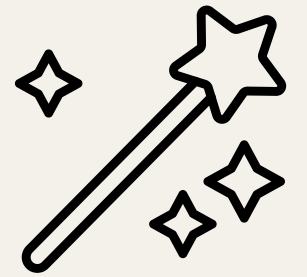
X : How good is the gameplay of digital sovereignty in the West?
Me : Mostly crap. We don't use maps, we use stories and have endless blah blah sessions of consultants trying to define digital sovereignty. It's like generals trying to win a war by giving it the right name.

[Post übersetzen](#)

1:06 nachm. · 22. Okt. 2020

 1  5  23  2 

Magical concepts (sovereignty and governance)



‘Magic’ is entertaining. It excites discussion, but when the show is over many hard choices remain“.

– Pollitt, Christopher, and Peter Hupe. "Talking about government: The role of magic concepts." *Public management review* 13.5 (2011): 641-658.

Characteristics:

1. Conceptual breadth
2. Normative appeal
3. Assumption of broad consensus
4. Global marketability

Abstract

This article examines the phenomenon of 'magic' concepts – those key terms which seem to be pervasive among both academics and practitioners. Within that category our focus is on 'governance', 'accountability' and 'networks'. Our prime purpose is to map their meanings and how they are used. Following an analysis of a wide range of literature – both academic and practitioner – we find that these concepts have properties in common which help promote their popularity. A high degree of abstraction, a strongly positive normative charge, a seeming ability to dissolve previous dilemmas and binary oppositions and a mobility across domains, give them their 'magic' character. Limitations are also identified. Magic concepts are useful, but potentially seductive. They should not be stretched to purposes for which they are not fitted.

Key words

Accountability, discourse, governance, government, networks, political language, rhetoric, transparency

TALKING ABOUT GOVERNMENT

The role of magic concepts

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<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>
DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2010.532963

Global cooperation?



- UN: World Summit on the Information Society and the Global Digital Compact
- Yet many decisions remain in exclusive spaces such as the OECD, G7 and G20
 - **What options does Lesotho have in the governance of digital technologies?**



WSIS in brief

World Summit on the Information Society (2003-2005):

First global process on digital technologies

- Vision of a “people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented information society”.
- Internet Governance Forum of the UN
- Consensus resolution of UN General Assembly



Missing Link: 20 years of WSIS – and (not) a bit of multi-stakeholder?

Digital participation, freedom of expression and human rights are the focus of the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). A review after 20 years.

[heise online](#) / Jul 13, 2025

Global Digital Compact



United Nations Geneva

@UNGeneva · Follow



"We must come together around a Global Digital Compact – to avoid fragmentation, safeguard human rights, and ensure technology is a force for human wellbeing, solidarity, and progress."

[@antonioguterres](#) [#WTISD](#) [un.org/en/observances...](#)



3:58 AM · May 18, 2023



336



Reply

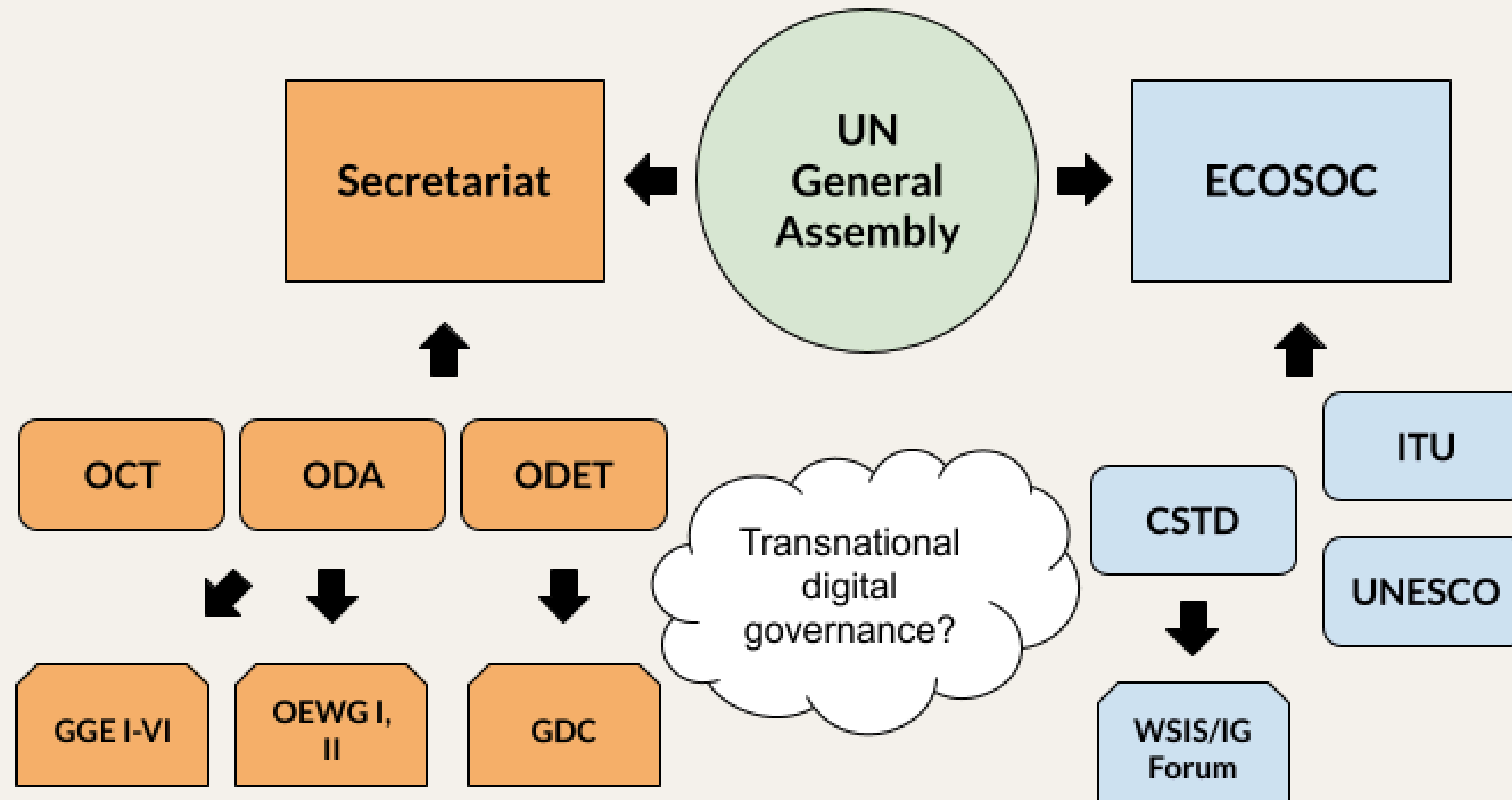


Copy link

[Read 71 replies](#)

Fragmentation vs coherence

INSTITUTIONAL COMPETITION WITHIN THE UN



06

What can you do?



**Engage.
Participate.
Inform yourself.**



What has to change on a political level?

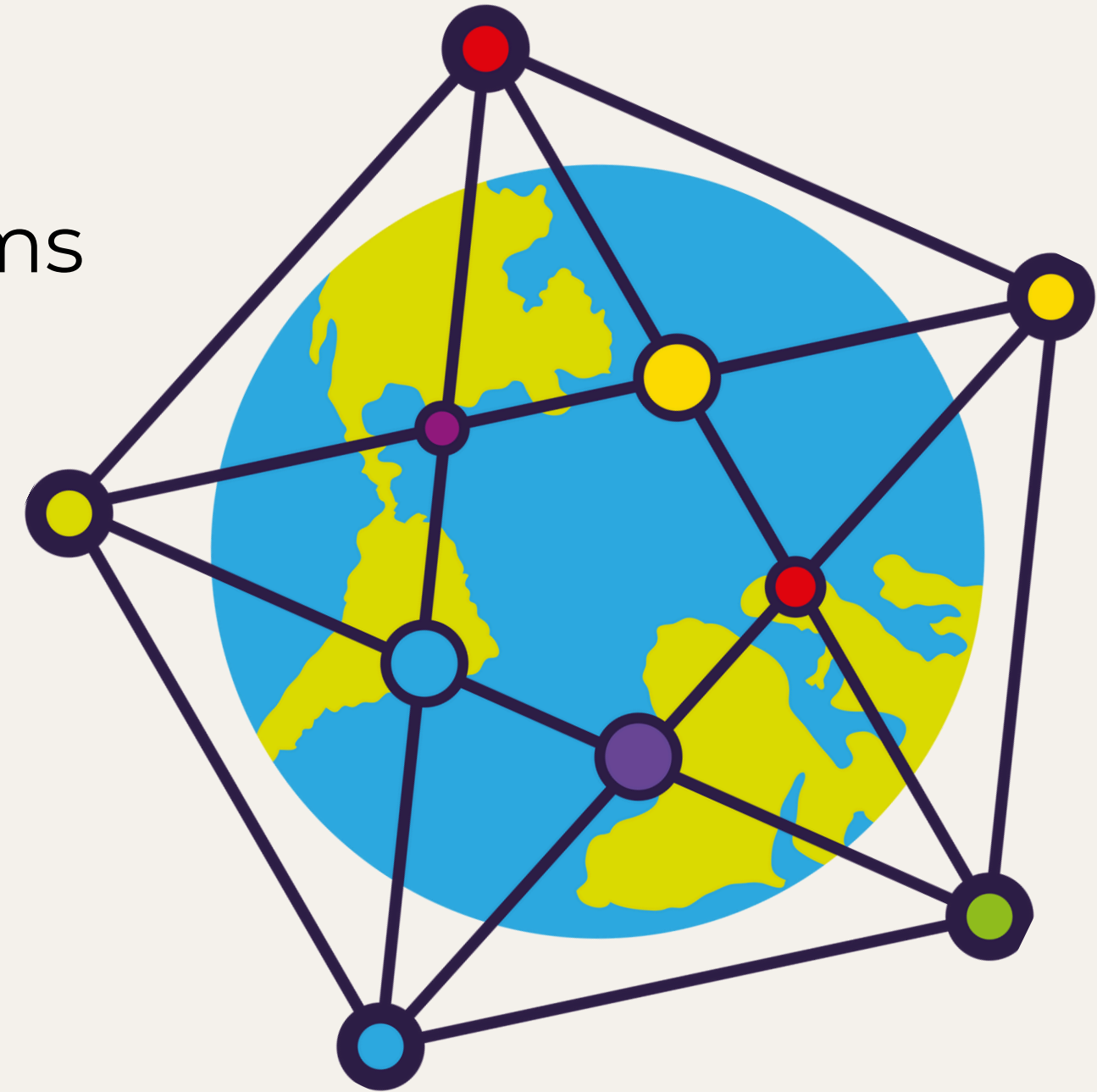
- Brainstorming with word cloud on digital rights and responsibilities.

<https://answer garden.ch/5111931>



Policy Recommendations

- **Wikipedia-Test**
 - Support non-commercial platforms
- **Open Movement**
 - open source, open science, open educational resources, ...
- **Public money = public good**
 - educational and scientific content under Creative Commons Licenses



Thank you!



- ✉ sophia.longwe@wikimedia.de
- 🐙 [@tawonga@mastodon.social](https://mastodon.social/@tawonga)
- 🦋 [@sophiatawonga.bsky.social](https://bsky.social/@sophiatawonga)