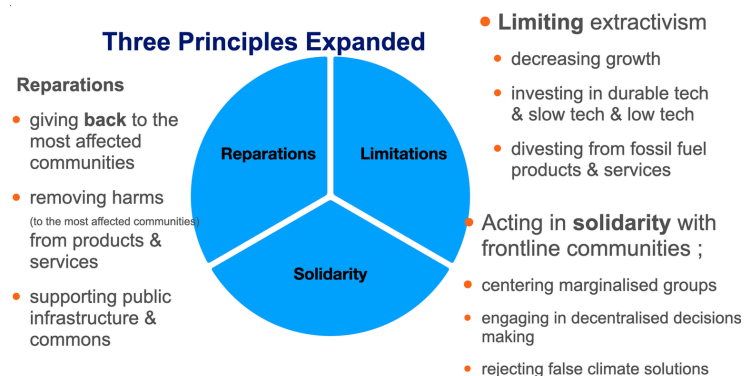# Internet Infrastructure and Climate Justice

—Vesna Manojlovic, BECHA@ripe.net, RIPE NCC, 28-October-2022

When it comes to the governance of Internet infrastructure, we are still not considering environmental impacts enough. I suggest that we quickly move beyond "Environmental Impact" and towards "Climate Justice".

As a Community Builder for RIPE NCC, and as an activist/artist/hacker/parent, my suggestions are summarised as 3 principles for (technical) Internet Governance: Solidarity, Limitations, Reparations. *(inspired by the (old) principles of (IPv4) address-space distribution: Conservation, Aggregation, Registration).*

Three Principles Expanded

Reparations
- giving **back** to the most affected communities
- removing harms (to the most affected communities) from products & services
- supporting public infrastructure & commons

- **Limiting** extractivism
  - decreasing growth
  - investing in durable tech & slow tech & low tech
  - divesting from fossil fuel products & services

- Acting in **solidarity** with frontline communities ;
  - centering marginalised groups
  - engaging in decentralised decisions making
  - rejecting false climate solutions

Solidarity

Technical Communities (IETF, RIPE & other RIRs, ICANN, ACM, etc) *must* work together with, and in solidarity with, "frontline communities" — those that are most impacted by the consequences of the unsustainable way the "internet industry's" business is being conducted. Other aspects of solidarity are: placing marginalised groups in the centre of any decision making processes, questioning privileges of mainstream groups and "multistakeholder bodies", and being critical when reviewing proposed solutions - in order to refuse false climate solutions.

Limitations

Technical communities have been focused on growth, "progress" & innovation since the start of the Internet, and the change from these attitudes is as painful as it is necessary. We *should* learn from other sciences that there is no unlimited growth when we depend on finite resources. There is a plethora of existing approaches that we can implement in internet engineering: de-growth, divestment, circular economy, caring economy… And the new challenges for the creative spirits will have to be directed towards **decrease**: low tech, slow tech, durable tech (as opposed to planned obsolescence). Jevon's paradox is important to mention here.

Something we should embrace without any doubt is to limit, decrease and finally completely **abandon any use of fossil fuels** in Internet industry.

Reparations

The "reparations" principle is the hardest to accept, since it is confrontational and divisive - but it stems from the acknowledging the existing divisions & inequalities that are unjust and exploitative, both historically and contemporary. If we want the future to be sustainable, we have to **repair** the harms that have been inflicted to the most affected communities, **remove** the harms from existing services, and **stop** the new harms from being done. Within Global North, we should support technologies that are contributing to the public and to commons (as opposed to corporations, or commercial interests). And the Global South has to receive reparations from Global North — in the inter-governmental, commercial and personal areas.

As techies, we can focus on technologies that (first) decrease and (finally) remove exploitation. We can focus on Free/Libre & Open Source Software, hardware, standards & protocols.

Motivation

I want to cross-connect IETF community with digital-rights activists, artists, philosophers, hackers, & climate justice activists, who are already working on "environmental impacts of tech".

https://labs.ripe.net/author/becha/towards-climate-justice-in-tech/

More information:

https://media.ccc.de/v/bitsundbaeume-19907-greening-ripe-though-activism-and-empathy-en-
https://wiki.techinc.nl/File:Bits_und_Baume_Greening_RIPE_copy-compressed.pdf

- RIPE & IETF are part of Internet Governance power structures
- Climate Crisis is impacting internet infrastructure
- "Data is the New Oil"

- Feelings:
    - Climate Grief & Climate Anxiety
    - Hope & Curiosity about adjacent communities
    - Frustration by slow actions in RIPE & IETF

Bio

Vesna Manojlovic is Community Builder at RIPE NCC. Vesna joined the RIPE NCC as a Trainer in 1999. In 2003, she took responsibility for developing and delivering advanced courses, such as RPSL, Routing Registry, DNSSEC and IPv6. In 2008, she lead efforts to establish IPv6 RIPEness as a measure of IPv6 deployment among LIRs. In 2011, she joined the Science Division as Manager of the Measurements Community Building team; in 2015 she moved to Communications Department as Senior Community Builder, with a focus on organising hackathons. Vesna gives presentations at many technical conferences and workshops, and enjoys visiting hackerspaces. Vesna received a Batchelor of Sciences Degree in Computer Science and Informatics from the School of Electrical Engineering, University of Belgrade. She has three children.

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