Call for an Internet Social Forum
The Internet belongs to all people – Let's *occupy* it

More and more, the Internet is the place where we meet up with our friends, get information, organise work, store our pictures and texts, do our banking, see videos, buy tickets and get public services. As we use the Internet extensively, we begin to be **"known"** through the Internet equally intimately. Soon, it will also hold extensive transactional information from the many "things" in our daily lives—the entire range of domestic devices as well as public and private infrastructure and services. All this knowledge is power, which can be put to good use or bad. Not only does the Internet increasingly hold too much information about us, with the advancing networked automation and remote access, it provides the power to reach anywhere to control physical spaces and activities.

It being so central to our daily lives and social systems, what do we want the Internet to look like in the future? Should it be a decentralised network for unmediated social connections, and for creating, exchanging and sharing information, publicly or privately as we choose? Will we have applications oriented to better living conditions, education and cultural development for all; services that guarantee the privacy of our data; technology our communities can trust, collectively own and control? Or will it be a surveillance-centric network controlled by a handful of governments and corporate monopolies that have a continuous micro-view of our interaction spaces; commoditise our information; extract exorbitant revenue by selling our private data; and police all of our online (and increasingly offline) activities? **What Internet do we want?**

As in the beginnings of the Internet, both trends are present; but the Internet is fast evolving towards the second scenario, as major transnational corporations concentrate their control over the net and security services such as the US National Security Agency and its close allies engage in pervasive monitoring. Such centralised control of international communications and data, alongside a vacuum of legal checks and balances with global application, are leading to an accumulation of global power in a few hands. This, in turn, not only threatens to further exacerbate imbalances of wealth and power, but could undermine the very bases of democratic society.

So then, what can be done to reverse this trend, before it becomes irrevocably ingrained in the Internet's DNA, and 'normalised'? In particular, how can organisations working for social justice, democracy, communication rights, free/libre and open-source software, net neutrality, or the broad range of human rights, as well as for citizen empowerment above that of governments or corporations, contribute to building a People's Internet?

This call for an **Internet Social Forum** aims to create a global space precisely to take up these

issues, where we will discuss the Internet we want, share information on our endeavours and struggles for democracy, human rights and social justice in relation to the Internet, and develop collective action agendas.

Why a Social Forum? The Internet Social Forum (ISF) takes its inspiration from the World Social Forum (WSF) process and its visionary call that "Another world is possible"—we are suggesting that "Another (People's) Internet is possible". Recalling the [WSF Charter](#), which calls for a different kind of globalisation than that "commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests", we are calling for an Internet from below which is controlled by the people-- including those not yet connected.

The WSF Charter presents the vision that "globalisation in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in history", marked by respect for universal human rights and the environment, and resting on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples. We see the ISF as a direct parallel to these efforts but within the sphere of the Internet and its governance.

From its first edition in Porto Alegre, in 2001, the WSF has been conceived as a people's opposition to the elites of the Davos World Economic Forum (WEF) which we have now come to call the "1%"--those who represent and benefit from banker imposed austerity measures, from the globalisation of capital, and the ideological and institutional dominance of neo-liberalism; and also now in its Internet embodiment – the "Net Mundial Initiative" (NMI), recently launched by the World Economic Forum. The WEF's NMI is directed as the elite's attempt to provide self-serving 'solutions' with regard to global Internet-related public policy issues, and it simply takes one significant step forward in the WEF's continuing efforts to enable an economic and political hegemony by global corporations and the global 1%. The WSF process appears as the obvious and appropriate space to launch a movement for a People's Internet rather than an Internet in the interests of global economic and political elites.

Beyond the technical issues of standards and management of domain names, Internet governance is increasingly about finding appropriate ways to respond to the larger framework of social and economic justice and human rights issues that are emerging as the Internet impacts society at large. The governance of the Internet should be undertaken based on the same democratic principles and mechanisms as we expect in other aspects of our lives.

The Internet Social Forum will be open to participation by all those who believe in the philosophy and values of the WSF, and that the global Internet must evolve in the public interest. It will be underpinned by values of democracy, human rights and social justice. It will stand for participatory policy-making and promote people's control of social technologies, as for instance is represented in the community media movement. It will seek an Internet that is truly

decentralised in its architecture and based on people's full rights to and control over data, information, knowledge and other 'commons' that the Internet has enabled the world community to generate and share.

The Forum also proposes to launch a bottom-up process for developing a People's Internet Manifesto, involving all concerned social groups, communities and movements, in different regions; from techies and ICT-for-development actors to media reform groups, democracy movements, women's rights organisations and social justice activists.

Next steps: A preliminary planning workshop will be held at the 2015 WSF, in Tunis, in March, titled '*Organising an Internet Social Forum – A call to occupy the Internet*'. The Internet Social Forum is being planned for late 2015, or early 2016. Provision will be made for remote participation.

How to participate in the ISF initiative: As a people's initiative, anyone motivated to support the public interest is welcome to join. However, as a matter of maintaining a congruence of some basic values, we follow the criteria of participation followed by the World Social Forum which can be found at https://fsm2015.org/en/criteria-participation. Anyone self-declaring as fulfilling these criteria may join by sending an email to the following addresses.

ISF secretariat : secretariat@InternetSocialForum.net

Regional contacts:

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Latin America/Caribbean	Sally Burch	Email: SallyB@InternetSocialForum.net

Initial list of participating organisations :

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Advocates of Science and Technology for the People, Philippines
Agencia Latinoamericana de Información, Regional
All India Peoples Science Network, India
Alternative Informatics Association, Turkey
Arab NGO Network for Development, Regional
Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication(BNNRC), Bangladesh
Association for Proper Internet Governance, Switzerland
Centre for Community Informatics Research, Development and Training, Canada
Chaos Computer Club Schweiz, Switzerland
CODE-IP Trust, Kenya
Computer Professionals Union, Philippines
Digital Empowerment Foundation, India
Foro de Comunicación para la Integración de Nuestr'América, Regional (América
Latina)
Free Press, USA
Free Software Movement of India, India
Fundación-Redes-y-Desarrollo, República Dominicana
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Global_Geneva, Switzerland
GodlyGlobal.org, Switzerland
Institute for Local Self-Reliance - Community Broadband Networks, USA
Instituto del Tercer Mundo, Uruguay
International Alliance on Information for All (IAIA), Global
IT for Change, India
Just Net Coalition, Global
Knowledge Commons, India
Open-Root/EUROLINC, France
Other News, Italy
P2P Foundation, Global
Project Allende, Ireland and Argentina
SLFC.in, India
Solidarius (Solidarity Economy Network), Italy
Southern Africa Telecentre Network(SATNET), Zambia
The Network Institute for Global Democratization, Finland
The New Power by Synthecracy Movement, Global
Transnational Institute, Global
uncomputing.org, global
Verein grundrechte.ch, Switzerland
Young Internet Professionals, Africa
Surysur , Regional (América Latina)
Argentina Hub for Internet Governance, Brazil
Fundación para la Integración Latinoamericana (FILA), Regional (América
Latina)
Action Aid, India
Media Rights Agenda, Nigeria
Fundación Casa del Bosque, Colombia
Forum for a new world governance, Argentina
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Thailand
Indigenous Environmental Association of Panama, Panama
Revista Question, Regional (América Latina)
WilhelmTux-Kampagne für freie Software, Switzerland
"National Movement for Hope" of Mexico, Mexico
Noticias de América Latina y el Caribe (NODAL), Regional (América Latina)
1st-Mile Institute, USA
Periódico Desdeabajo, Colombia
Studio 12 - Electronic & TV Media, Slovenia
Association for Culture and Education – PiNA, Slovenia
Institute for Electronic Participation, Slovenia
Digitale Gesellschaft Schweiz, Switzerland
Appropriate Technology Promotion Society (ATPS) India
Swiss Open Systems User Group /ch/open, Switzerland
Isis International
VOICE, Bangladesh