

Online social networking and sustainable development

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Better living for all—sustainably

Some background information

- The International Institute for Sustainable Development: www.iisd.org
 - Our mandate
 - Our work
- The Global Connectivity Program at IISD
 - What our key issues are
 - Networks that we host

A few questions to explore today

- ❖ The complex challenges now facing the world cannot be solved by single institutions or individuals working on their own.
- ❖ We are organizing ourselves and our institutions in new ways in an effort to meet those challenges.
- ❖ However...
- ❖ In the process of speeding up and expanding new social connections, are we inadvertently:
 - ❖ Underestimating the gaps in digital literacy;
 - ❖ Causing governments to become incapable of making decisions and acting; and
 - ❖ Dumbing down the sustainability agenda?



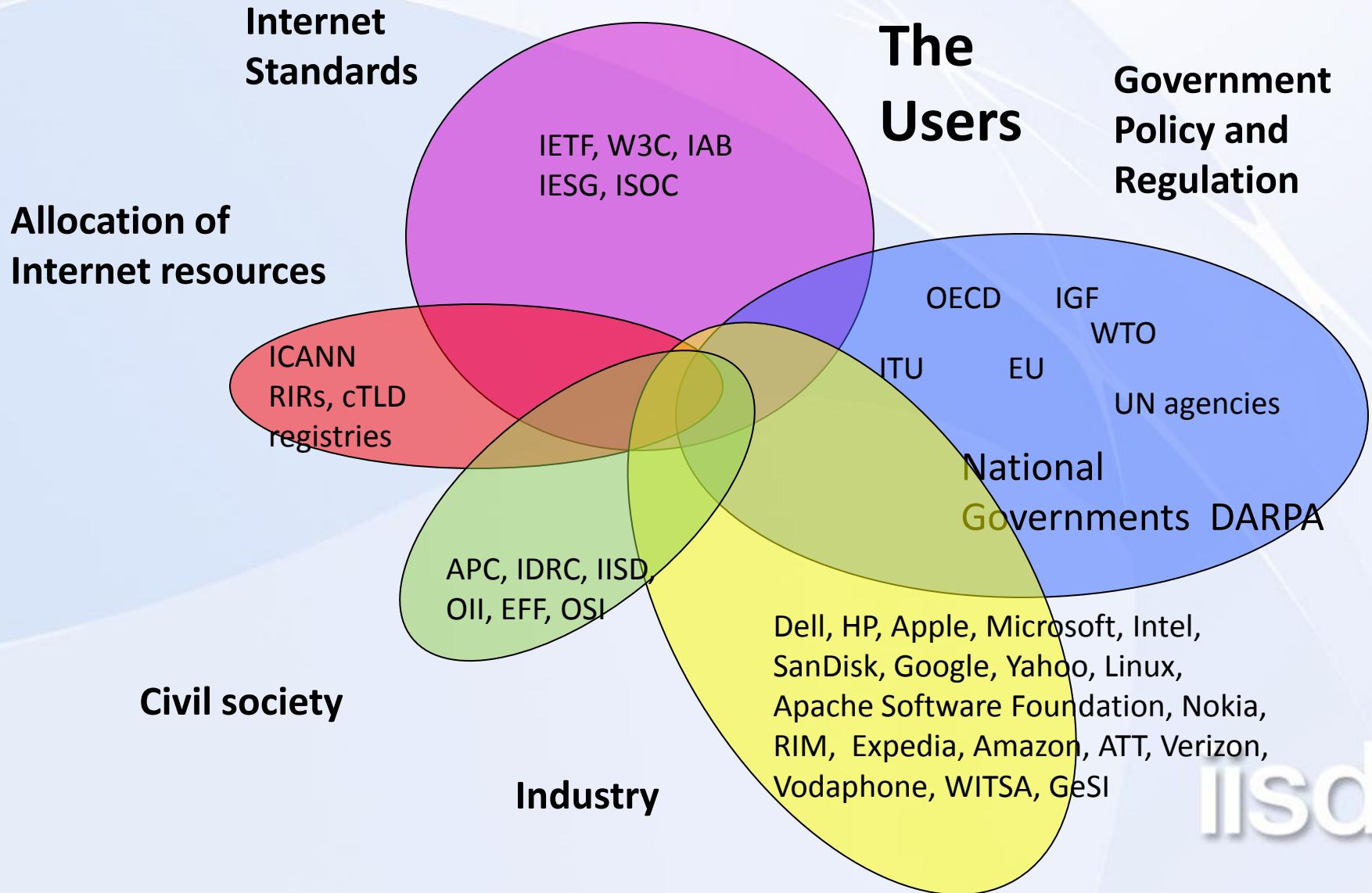
What is Governance for Sustainable Development?

- Global SD governance is organized action by individuals and by organizations such as governments, intergovernmental bodies, the private sector, community and NGO bodies taken to achieve sustainable development objectives concerning problems of global interest [Hanson, IISD]

What is “networked governance”?

- The movement from vertical to horizontal governance... driven by growing citizen demands for more personalized and connected services, the plummeting costs of collaboration ..., the rise in outsourcing, and a new attitude towards networking.” [Eggers, Deloitte-Touche 2007]
- Characterized by systems of communications, knowledge exchange, and dialogue
- Underpinned by the Internet

Key groups making decisions about the Net



Critical Internet uncertainties and their impact on online social networking

- ❖ Access
- ❖ Diversity
- ❖ Environmental impact
- ❖ Business model
- ❖ Security and privacy

Some questions

- Digital literacy
- Slowing down government
 - Correlation between speed of communications and govt processes
 - Can you have effective social networks without a right to information? : Canadian Supreme Court case
 - Performance of some Canadian govt depts
- Dumbing down the agenda
 - Communicating complexity in 140 characters
 - 7.9 million monthly users of “Lil Green patch”

How online social networking can support sustainable development action

- The potential to change how people learn about sustainable development issues
 - SD values through peer networks
 - SD Knowledge more visible
 - Local issues have global reach
 - Bridging disciplines
- The potential to increase the mobilization of resources
 - Financial
 - People
- The potential to sustain commitments over time

