

If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

The Governance Model of the Internet Exchange Point DE-CIX.

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Structure

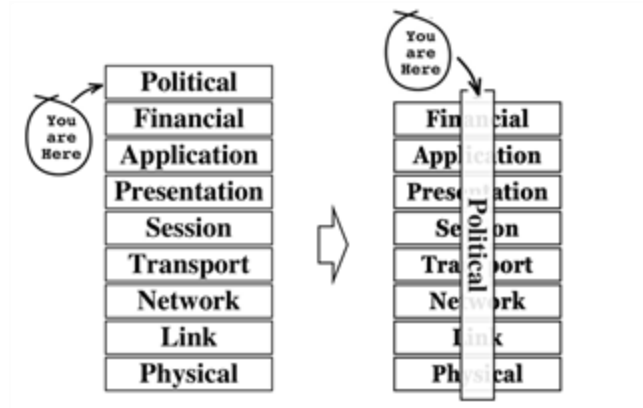
1. Research Problem
2. Literature
3. Theoretical Framework
4. Research Design
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. Recommendations



1. Research Problem - The Political Layer

"We cannot assume that the Internet will evolve automatically in a direction that is going to be compatible with democracy."

Rebecca MacKinnon (2012)



1.1 Research Problem – Internet Exchange Points

- An IXP is “a network facility that enables the interconnection and exchange of Internet traffic between more than two independent Autonomous Systems” (Internet Society, 2017).
- Research Question:
*How does DE-CIX’s **governance model** influence **decision-making processes** in the context of Internet governance?*



2. Literature – Governance of IXPs

- IXPs emerged in the 1990s from a paradox:
 - ISPs cooperate via peering while competing
 - Created connectivity economy (Meier-Hahn, 2019)
- Governance models vary (Wagner & Mindus, 2015):
 - **Industry-led** (DE-CIX)
 - **Multistakeholder-led** (CAIX)
 - **Hybrid** (KIXP)
- Member-based IXPs (LINX/AMS-IX) allow direct voting;
DE-CIX delegates decisions to eco (industry association)

3. Theoretical Framework

- **Commons & Connectivity** as a Shared Good
 - IXPs as common-pool resources (Ostrom, 1990)
- **Digital Sovereignty**, between Control & Commons
 - Excluding civil society (Pohle & Santaniello, 2024)
- **Multistakeholder Governance**, Inclusion or Illusion?
 - Decision-making across sectors (Hofmann, 2016)

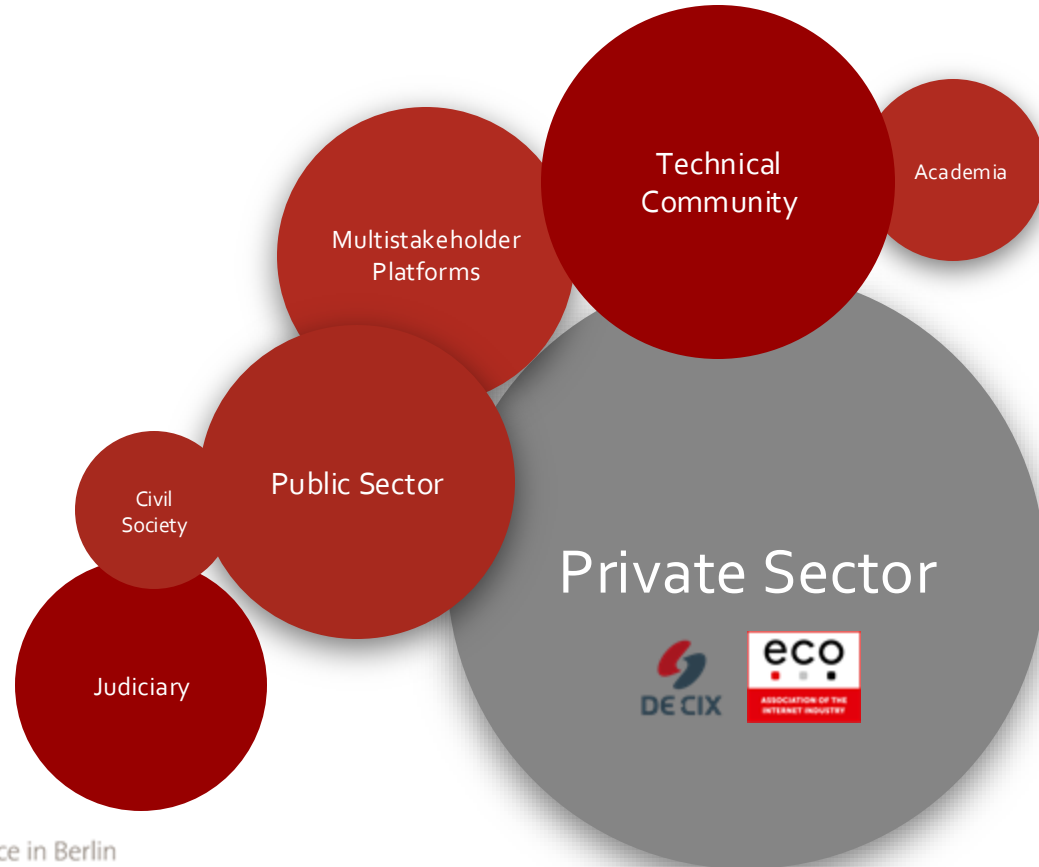
—> Exposing a democratic legitimacy gap (Weber, 2024)



4. Research Design

- **Case Study:** Focus on DE-CIX, the world's largest IXP
- **Process Tracing:** Chronologically reconstructs key decisions and institutional changes (1995–2025)
- **Political Ethnography:** Observation of actor behavior and informal dynamics through participant observation

5. Results - Stakeholder Mapping



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5.1 Results – From Grassroots to Global



6. Discussion – Governance Model

- DE-CIX combines **formal** oversight by eco with **informal**, engineer-driven market feedback.
- Governance is **commons-based** but not participatory, as it is **pragmatic**.
- Legitimacy stems from **responsiveness**, not formal votes.



6.1 Discussion – Decision-Making Processes

- DE-CIX exports its model globally, raising issues of inclusion of local communities.
- **Male-dominated** leadership, weak civil society and non-commercial engagement.
- Independent advisory board is **dysfunctional**.



7. Recommendations: Fix what is missing!

- To *enhance democratic legitimacy*, DE-CIX should:
 - institutionalize **multistakeholder** governance
 - recognize interconnection as a **common good**
 - ensure **equitable** global expansion
 - improve **transparency** and **accountability**
 - promote diversity in leadership
 - commission a **historical review**
 - create an independent **policy unit**, and
 - advance the coordination of **global governance**.



Thank you!

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