Project methodology

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Although digital sovereignty is a leitmotif for many, it has been appropriated by different actors to mean different things.

Herein lies one of the challenges: sovereignty only became a dominant principle of ordering the world because *it meant the same thing to all actors*. Paradoxically, 'digital sovereignty' means different things to each actor in the internet governance constellation, and sometimes even takes on a different meaning to the same actor. Hence, our approach is to set out a framework that allows us – in the first instance – to 'map out the meanings' of digital sovereignty.

Phase I: in 'listening' mode, we use interviews and ethnographic methods (the 'distended case approach') to collate opinions and experiences from at least 16 respondents (from civil society, the technical community, academia, and policymakers) in five world regions: Latin America, North America, Europe, Western Asia, and Eastern Asia. We explore what people believe 'digital sovereignty' and its variants (cybersovereignty, etc.) imply for functioning of the open internet. Brief anonymised reports summing up the findings from each of the five regions will be published on this website in our publications section.

> **i** What is the distended case approach?
>
> The distended case approach provides us with tools to understand local implementation of global policy norms. It enables us to travel
>> "within cosmopolitan policy networks without becoming another creature of those networks; of making sense of fast-moving 'best practices' without losing sight of prosaic practice; of taking account of phenomena like policy tourism and policy tradeshows without succumbing to explanatory dilettantism, or some kind of methodological 'tourism, [just] tripping around from site to site' (Burawoy, 2001, p.148; Gonzälez, 2011; McCann, 2011; Peck, 2011a)" Peck and Theodore (2012), p.25.

Phase II: we use this knowledge to develop our educational offering, which will confront these different approaches with each other. In addition to the module for young diplomats at UNU-CRIS, and a Digital Sovereignty course at the VUB's Brussels School of Governance, the team will organise workshops at I* org conferences (IETF, RIRs, ICANN, and also IGF) to help the technical community grasp the concept of digital sovereignty, and its implications for the future of the non-sovereign internet.

Phase III: we build upon the previous phases to share our reflections on our overarching question: **Can global internet coordination organisations continue to work in the "absence of sovereignty"?** This phase of the project will be conceptual and serve as a launchpad for broader academic and policy-oriented debates in this space.

Peck, Jamie, and Nik Theodore. 2012. "Follow the Policy: A Distended Case Approach." *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 44 (1): 21–30. https://doi.org/10.1068/a44179.