

“Data Sovereignty” vs “Free Flow of Data”: a polarized policy debate is dangerous for our digital future, warns new I&JPN Report

Data is everywhere and it is an increasingly valuable asset for firms, governments, and society at large. Due to its importance, it is no surprise that the issue is high on international policy agendas. However, a growing polarization in policy debates hampers constructive ways forward to handle the massive amounts of data across borders, which now underpin almost all human activities.

A [new Report](#) “We Need to Talk About Data: Framing the Debate Around the Free Flow of Data and Data Sovereignty” released by the multistakeholder organization, the Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network (I&JPN) on April 6, 2021, highlights the need for a more nuanced debate on “Data Sovereignty” and “Free Flow of Data”.

“We need to promote a more sophisticated understanding of the issue of data in order to both harness its opportunities and address its challenges in a holistic manner. This Report frames the debate in more nuanced terms and puts forth innovative approaches for moving forward - such as through the concept of the Datasphere” said Lorryne Porciuncula, Director of Data at I&JPN and Co-Author of the Report.

Through a survey of over 100 respondents, 4 roundtable discussions, and over 30 interviews, I&JPN brought together actors from governments, the private sector, civil society, technical community, international organizations, and academia in an effort to map ways to reconcile these apparently conflicting policy approaches.

The resulting Report presents a holistic snapshot of the concerns and perspectives and offers key recommendations on how to move forward - calling out for:

- a debate that is global, multi-stakeholder, and most importantly, across sectors
- reframing data policy discussions in a much more nuanced manner
- innovative tools, frameworks, and concepts to address the issue of data
- new institutional approaches to foster coherent and inclusive policies

“How to organize the coexistence and interactions of billions of people and entities in the digital age is a civilizational challenge. Striving to achieve common objectives, such as maximizing well-being for all and defining the distribution of responsibilities among actors, should guide our efforts to collectively build an inclusive digital society” said Bertrand de La Chapelle, Executive Director and Co-Founder, I&JPN and Co-Author of the Report.

The Report was funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany (BMWi), and the launch event on April 6, 2021 is co-organized with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (METI), on the occasion of the World Economic Forum Global Technology Governance Summit.

The I&JPN Secretariat will be initiating further consultations across sectors and regions to expand awareness of the Report’s findings and foster a collaborative discussion on how to organize our common Datasphere.

About the Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network

The Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network is the multistakeholder organization addressing the tension between the cross-border internet and national jurisdictions. Its Paris-based Secretariat facilitates a global policy process in which over 400 key entities including governments, the world’s largest internet companies, technical operators, civil society groups, academia and international organizations from over 70 countries work together. They enhance policy coherence and legal interoperability through the joint development of operational solutions.

The Report and Executive Summary can be downloaded here:

www.internetjurisdiction.net/aboutdata

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