

The Internet as Our New Infrastructure

It's About Infrastructure



My April 29th [talk](#) in Rio represents a shift in how I talk about “The Internet”.

Rather than getting caught up in debates about “network neutrality” and “Internet access” we need a fresh start that is “[Internet Native](#)”.

I hesitate to use the term “The Internet” because that very phrase frames the conversation in terms of traditional networks. The term also tends to be used for applications such as the web and social media, *both of* which have been enabled by this new infrastructure.

What is important about our new infrastructure is that it enables unfettered innovation by providing free-to-use connectivity between any two end points. Thus you can get to a website simply by typing in a URL.

This same technology means you can manage crops using connected drones by simply assuming that they are connected. If the field is on the other side of a hill beyond the range of your radio (these days, WiFi) the drone can still be reached via another village’s infrastructure. You do not have to do anything special nor even be aware of the additional steps along the path.

The same infrastructure could be used to make medical services available and support other Internet applications without having to constantly be negotiating with local owners and agreeing to terms you have not read.

Often I see advocates implementing a “wireless mesh as if that were the way to provide connectivity or, even more specifically, providing Internet access. The particular technology doesn’t matter – we can mix wireless or wired connectivity. We can even provide content (Wikipedia or movies) by delivering disk drivers via the mail.

I use the term “infrastructure” to emphasize the similarity to other very basic infrastructure such as roads and sidewalks that are not tied to any narrow purpose (or, in today’s parlance, use case) but rather provide opportunity for all.

If we are to have a sustainable infrastructure we need to have a way to pay for it and, just as important, a way to pay for it that doesn’t work at cross-purposes with creating generative opportunity.

If you want to follow the presentation you can view the slides [directly](#):

Our New Infrastructure Generative Opportunity

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This new framing is evolving and I appreciate [feedback](#) for how I can better explain the concepts and advance the conversation. There is also a related essay in progress (“[In-fastructure for a Connected World](#)”) You can read more about these ideas at <http://rnf.vc/FurtherReadings>.

You may also be interested in [this panel](#) at HOPE 2016 conference.