



VLADIMIR RADUNOVIC

BACKGROUND

On a warm June night of 1978, I was born in Belgrade, the capital of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Ironically, the country of my birth does not exist any more; moreover, I have lived in not less than four countries since I was born, in spite of the fact that I have never left Belgrade! Probably the gloomy political reality in the Balkans shaped my social interests, apart from the “genetically given” ones by my parents towards natural sciences.

Given that my parents are professors at the University of Belgrade - my father with the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and mother with the Faculty of Mathematics - and that my four-year older brother now holds a Ph D in Computer Networks, it appears that I could hardly have deviated much from engineering. Following the verified educational path of my older brother, I enrolled and completed Mathematics Grammar School in Belgrade, a prestigious grammar school in the region (though not that heavy for one loving mathematics and physics, as I did). For university, my choice of faculty was not easy. After hesitation, I finally decided for a family tradition and enrolled in the Faculty of Electrical Engineering. This started my interest in technology; accidentally, it started my interest in social action as well.

POLITICS AND EDUCATION

In 1997, at the time of my enrolment in the university, Belgrade was the capital of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Faculty of Electrical Engineering was one of the leaders in anti-Milosevic rallies and the repression over freedom of speech at the university, within media, and all over the state, including the bludgeoning and arrests of protestants by the police, encouraged me to get into the somewhat more severe and less structured resistance movement known as “Otpor!” [the Resistance]. My resistance involvement lasted up to the 5th of October of 2000 and the “October Revolution” that finally removed the dictatorship in Serbia.

Subsequently, along with organising resistant rallies and activities, I have been an active member of a large network of students from European universities - AEGEE. My activity has brought me invaluable knowledge and experience in cross-culture cooperation, project management, networking, and - above all - gave me the chance to visit Europe and meet people out of Serbia. Last, but not least, being a student representative in a working group of the Stability Pact for South East Europe in Serbia and later, in the University Council of the University of Belgrade, enriched my socio-political experiences, as well as interests.

In 2006, Belgrade became the capital of Serbia and Montenegro, and I finally grabbed my Diploma in Electrical Engineering. A common electrical engineer would be expected to dive deeper into the engineering. Not me, though - I went broader instead of deeper. At this moment, I am undertaking a MA programme in Contemporary Diplomacy with the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta. It is still not easy to explain why, not even to my parents and friends. Nevertheless, with my background in social and political activity, my professional engineering background, and my personality, this course is more than expectable, for me, at least. The chance to get involved with information and communication technology and diplomacy comes as result of my long and successful cooperation with Diplo's expertise within these interesting areas.

TODAY

Not only because the autocratic regime was finally dethroned and the further struggles for democracy were at last moved from the streets to official institutions and organisations, but also because a time has come for me to start becoming financially independent, I have started working in information technology support firstly for the

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Alternative Academic Educational Network (AAEN), and latter on for the well-known media station B92 - portrayed in many books as being a decisive source of information to the whole world by the Internet on the political chaos installed by Milosevic, today being one of the most powerful radio, TV and Internet media in Serbia and in region.

It was a rainy August evening of 2003 when a phone call interrupted my concentration in dismantling a computer. An acquaintance of mine informed me that he and the organisation he was working with at the time - DiploFoundation - were organising a course on the Internet that would present different aspects than a technical one. Knowing my wide interests, he suggested that I apply. This opportunity made me think heavily about my decision; it was a time that I had finally withdrawn from student activism, had started working in a full-time job, and had determined to complete my studies. Another activity could have cost me much. Yet, this was another break-through in my life.

The winter of 2003 opened for me the world of the information society, Internet responsibility and liability, threats and opportunities, globalisation, and emerging issues. My course activity and the final research work on privacy on the Internet were obviously liked by the course tutors and I was given the chance to participate in the first World Summit on the Information Society meeting in Geneva, December 2003. After that unique experience, however, I went back to my studies and left the Internet governance sphere. For a while.

Was it due to my incidental, renewed contact with Diplo, or due to their planned recruitment action? In the winter of 2004, I was offered to edit the Internet Governance Portal, collecting the information about my nearly forgotten obsession. At the time, I felt that the relatively limited field of information technology administration was already choking my wild interests--and this offer came as a rescue. A few months latter, I was fully bewitched and accepted without an objection the organisation of a huge and complex training programme, the Internet Governance Capacity Building programme (IGCBP).

Now, at the end of 2007, I am a proud coordinator of Diplo's third annual training programme. I shall not be modest about this--it is a great pleasure to witness the involvement of over 250 persons from all over the world within the Internet governance process! I am indeed grateful to them, as I have not only obtained a network of like-minded friends, but have also learned much from them about the Internet. I have also gained invaluable cultural insights and interests. As an illustration, I have

started learning Arabic, as an attempt to understand that culture and its habits. Not to get too much off my original track and to please my hyperactivity, I also currently work as a Managing Director of an information and communication technology company in Serbia, AVAcom Ing, founded in 2005 by a group of my colleagues.

THE EFFECTS OF THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME

Unlike most of the tutors of the programme that have gone through the course prior to taking a tutoring role, my own perspective is fully from behind the scenes. However, two aspects of the programme are particularly interesting and beneficial for all of us involved with it.

First, the concept of knowledge- and experience-sharing is vital. The course is not based on an ex-cathedra approach, with lecturers on one and students on the other side of the desk. Instead, the participants effectively build the knowledge of the group by sharing their thoughts and experiences related to the basic reading material. It is important to mention that all the participants are professionals--legal, technical, economic, cultural, and many others. Nevertheless, they have not linked their knowledge with the problems of the Internet, and are certainly missing knowledge from other relevant fields. Once they become familiar with the Internet governance issues, the link is made between their existing experience and this new field of interest, with value added by the knowledge provided by other participants. All this results in an amazing amount and quality of ideas and analysis.

Second, a worldwide community of people is built, accompanied by the network of the organisations and institutions each one represents. Such a community has an enormous analytic and decision-influencing potential once introduced to the global process. I dare say that this is the most important outcome of the programme that I felt: maintaining such a network actively encourages and enables the successful undertaking of numerous regional and local initiatives.

The existence of such a proactive community further motivates me to stay on the same track and, being in position to initiate and coordinate further IGCBP-related activities of Diplo, assist the fellow-colleagues to pursue similar trainings on regional levels all around the world, to help each other to fill in the gaps in our own knowledge - and interests!

THE WAY AHEAD

Each year of the course, each classroom, each discussion, widens my perspective so much that I started using mind maps to be able to encompass all the areas involved and



mixed up, and track those of my particular interest. For me it was particularly challenging to notice the difference of focus and interest in particular issues among different regional groups. Latin America colleagues are more concerned about network neutrality, privacy and security, and human rights. African groups are passionately analysing and discussing connection models, costs, and the telecommunication infrastructure, while the South-East Asian friends are interested in e-commerce and e-business issues.

My Serbian compatriots and, more generally, colleagues from South-Eastern Europe discuss the liberalisation process, monopolies, and regulatory aspects. Most of all, we are active in raising awareness about the relevance of information technology among decision makers. In countries of transition, it appears that the most challenging issue is to encourage official institutions to realise the important role of the Internet in overall welfare. Overall awareness building is needed in a transition society as a first step forward, to enlarge the front and achieve a multiplier effect. Once everyone starts

understanding the importance of the Internet, for both businessmen and the government, students and peasants, the way forward will become much more passable.

Again, in order to please my hyperactivity, while arranging further training programmes on a global level with my colleagues from Diplo and our Internet governance community, as well as local Internet governance-related initiatives and Information technology literacy activity with a business aspect through my company, I sometimes dig within the areas of my particular interests. My interests are a wild combination of infrastructure, market liberalisation, and socio-cultural perspectives of the Internet-needs of a common human being. A specific area I like to explore is the future of the Internet, usually referred to as “the emerging issues.” I look into the new phenomena that are arising, based on deep human needs and the new opportunities brought up by information and communication technology day-by-day. I am interested in not only how society shapes technology, but vice versa - how technology shapes society.

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