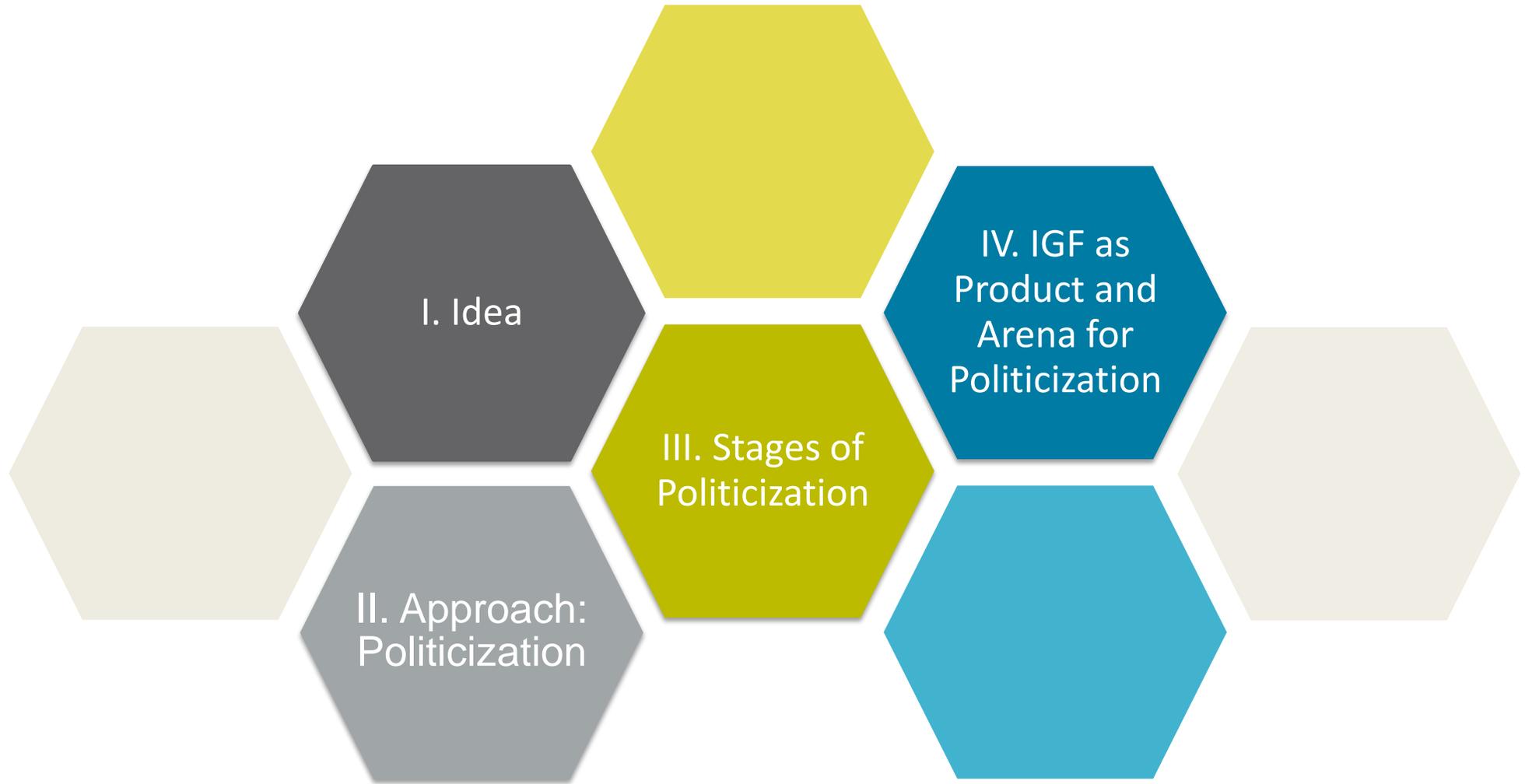# (De)Politicizing Internet Governance: The Role of the IGF

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Biannual Conference of the Swiss
Network of International Studies
Bern, 7th December 2013

Foto: InternetSociety, Flickr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

I. Idea

II. Approach: Politicization

III. Stages of Politicization
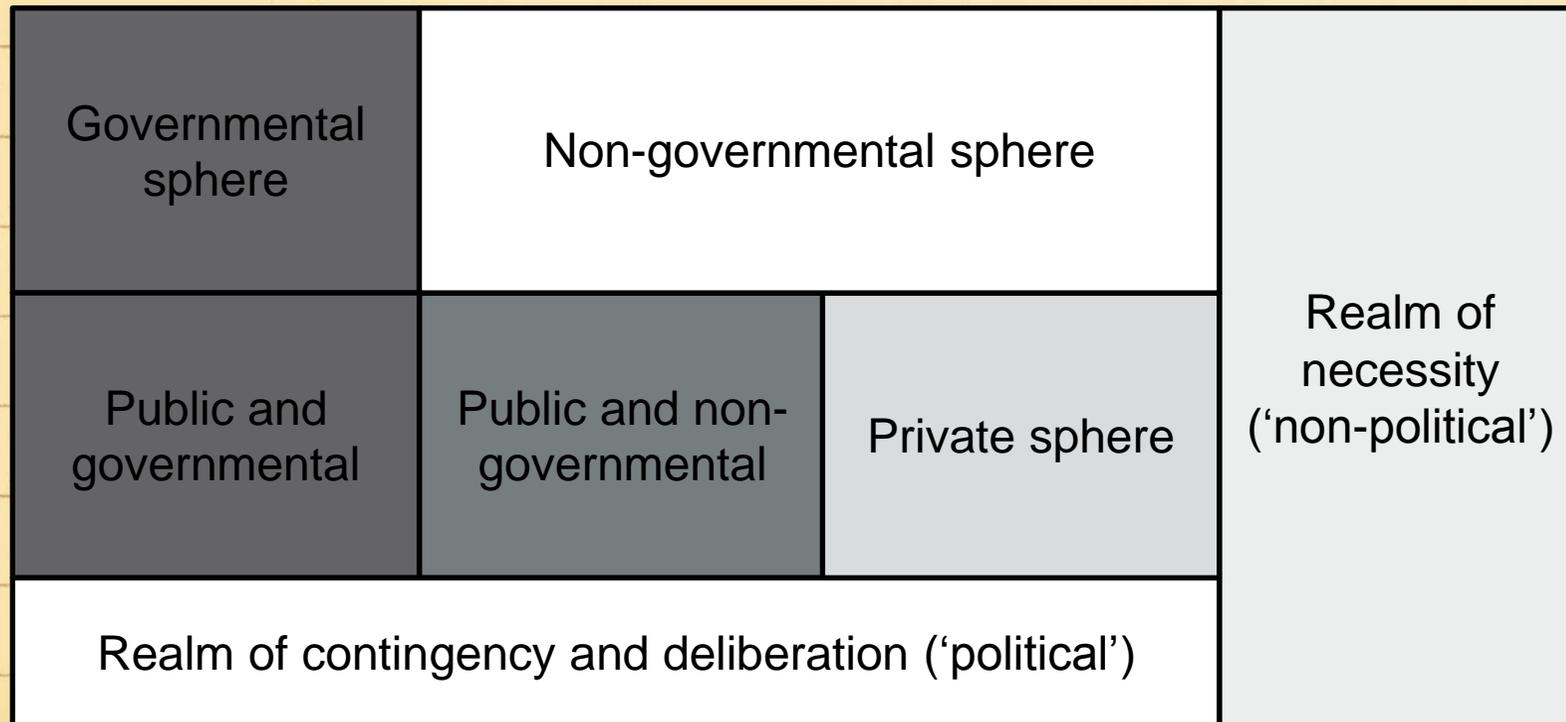
IV. IGF as Product and Arena for Politicization

Idea and Proposition

- History of IG/IGF can be analysed as a struggle around (de)politicization

- Subject of struggle: Control over Critical Internet Resources

  - Actors, Issues, Goals and Rationalities

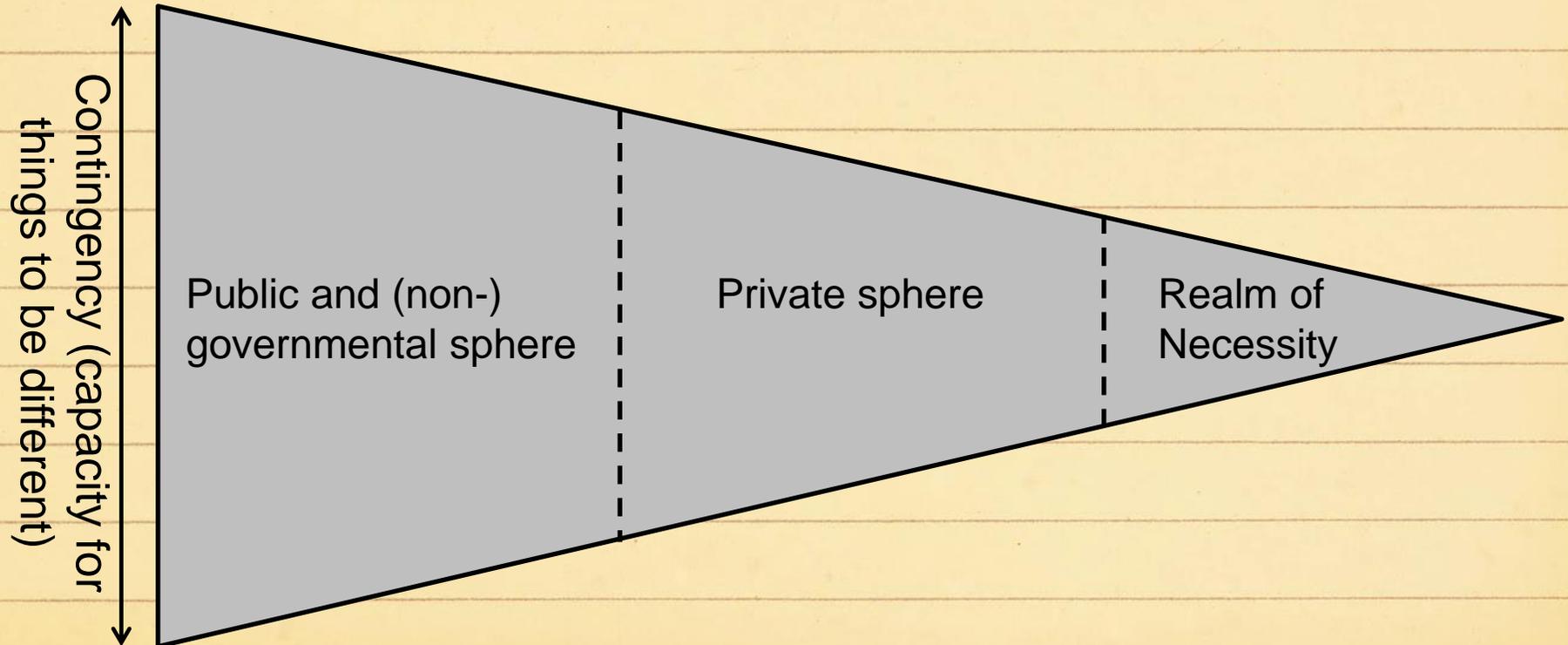- IGF is a product of and arena for this struggle

Politicization

- Subjecting issues to deliberation and decision making

- Collectively exploring capacity for things to be different (& thus contingent)

- Extension of collective agency

- Condition for recognizing and making use of political choice (Hay 2007, Palonen 2005)
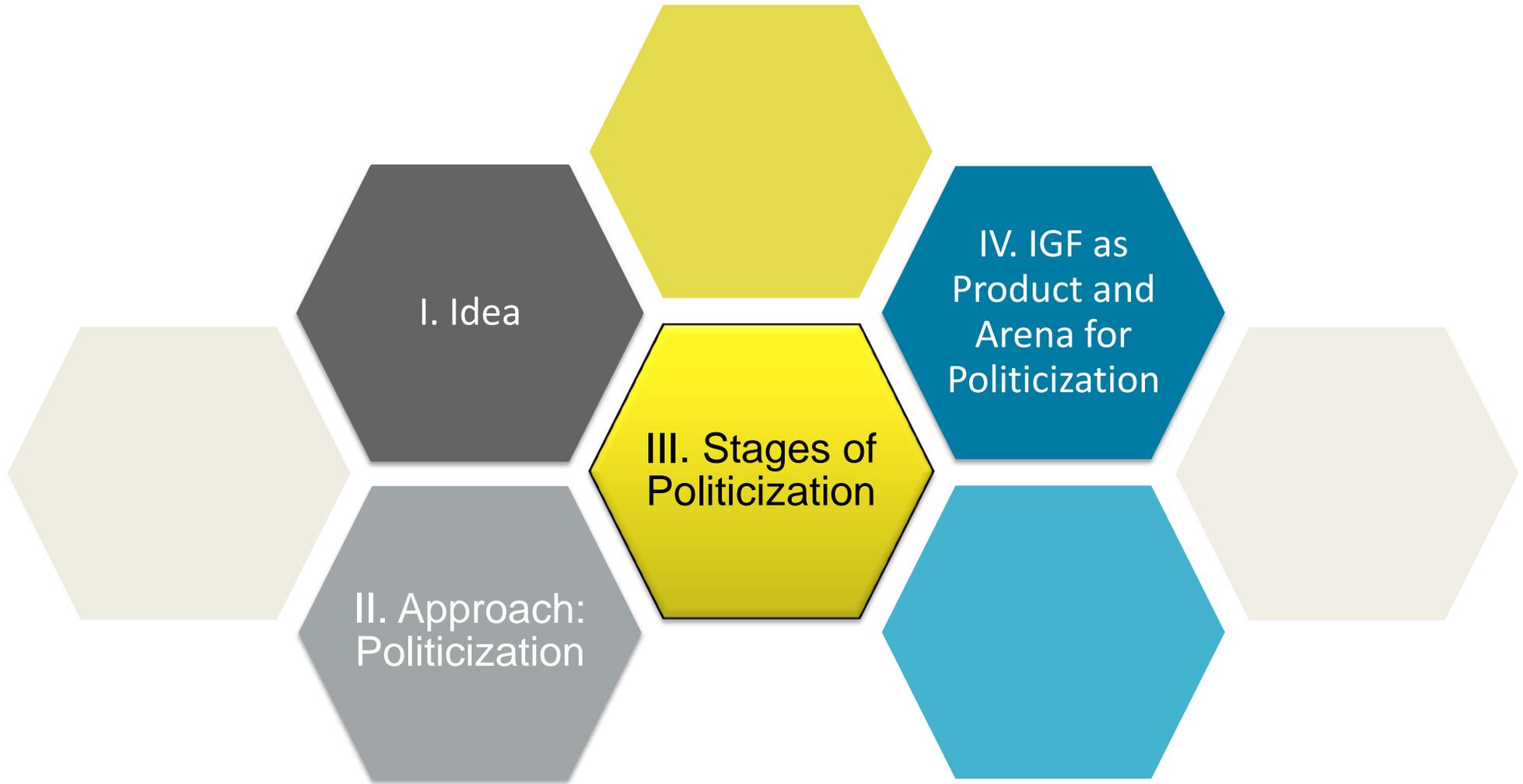
Mapping of the Political Realm

Governmental sphere	Non-governmental sphere		Realm of necessity ('non-political')
Public and governmental	Public and non-governmental	Private sphere	
Realm of contingency and deliberation ('political')			

(Colin Hay 2007: Why we hate politics)

Mapping of the Political Realm: Capacity for Things to be different

Contingency (capacity for things to be different)

| Public and (non-) governmental sphere | Private sphere | Realm of Necessity |

Stage 1: The Stability Mantra (I)

4 Principles:

1. Stability

2. Competition

3. private bottom-up coordination

4. representation

"The U.S. Government policy applies only to management of Internet names and addresses and does not set out a system of Internet "governance." Existing human rights and free speech protections will not be disturbed." (USG 1998, White Paper)

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Stage 1: The Stability Mantra (II)

Date: 23.10.1999

From: Joe Sims

To: Michael Froomkin

In the real world (…) in that real world, ICANN's mission is extremely limited: to maintain the stability of the DNS. Or, to put it more simply, to not screw it up. This is the prime objective, the overriding core task, the critical job. Everything else is secondary, or even lower than that, in importance and priority, and that includes anything that can remotely be described as governance.

Stage 2: Discovery of the Public Policy Issue (I)

49. The management of the Internet *encompasses both technical and public policy issues* and should involve all stakeholders and relevant intergovernmental and international organizations. In this respect it is recognized that:

a. Policy authority for Internet-related public policy issues is the sovereign right of States. (…)

b. The private sector has had and should continue to have an important role in the development of the Internet, *both in the technical and economic fields*

(Geneva Declaration of Principles, 2003)

Stage 2: Discovery of the Public Policy Issue (II)

1. We have *spent a lot of time, too much time, discussing architectural and management matters.* Developing nations need infrastructure, enabling regulatory systems, Internet usage levels that drive local content, a greater focus on multilingualism...

2. *The system works*, and evolves, an example being the creation and expansion of the Regional Internet Registry system.

3. The Internet Society urges participants in the WSIS to recognize this progress and *to consider whether new structures will bring truly measurable, positive change to the functioning, stability, security and openness of the Internet.*

(ISOC, PrepCom 3, 2005)

Stage 2: Discovery of the Public Policy Issue (III)

69. We further recognize the need for enhanced cooperation in the future, to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities, in *international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet*, but *not in the day-to-day technical and operational matters*, that do not impact on international public policy issues.

(Tunis Agenda, 2005)

Stage 3: Multistakeholderization (I)

"…the thoughts that are unspoken in the room (…) are that if we have learned anything from the last four years of these discussions, it's that the idea that Internet governance is a lot broader and a lot more than *just that one issue*. And that we have all talked about that issue and we kind of recognize it is the gorilla in the room that's far away."

(Ken Cukier 2006, IGF, Athens)

Conclusion: IGF as product and arena for politicization

- IGF successfully *branded* multi-stakeholder processes

  - and is now locked into the success of its truncated model*

- MS now confers legitimacy to policy making in the CIR area

- Price: modest form of politicization

- Contingency of issues and its emancipatory potential are marginal

- IGF offers a forum for new policy initiatives originating outside of IGF

* no formal output allowed beyond the chairman's summary

Thank you!

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