

Net neutrality policy debate in Croatia: Origins and policy actors

Mato Brautović*

SUMMARY

This study examines the debate on net neutrality in the Croatian public sphere, its origin and connection to similar debates in the United States and the EU. The study also tries to answer who the policy actors that influence the NN debate are, how the policy-making process concerning this topic was carried out in Croatia, and what the role of the mainstream media is. Empirical data was collected from documents and posts regarding net neutrality found on government, media, NGO and industry websites. The findings show that there are two parallel debates on net neutrality and the character of the Croatian policy-making process: the debate that is going on in the mainstream and online media, where international topics and actors (the US, the EU) dominate, and the debate that is happening in the Croatian public sphere, which is carried out as part of panels and conferences (mainly organised by the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries). Although the mainstream media reported positively about net neutrality, they have failed to bring the process of policy-making and the corresponding debate closer to the general public, as was the case in the US or Western Europe.

Keywords: net neutrality, Croatia, policy-making, e-debate, digital methods

Introduction

Net neutrality (NN) is one of the most debated telecommunication policy issues (Stiegel and Sprumut, 2012) and has direct consequences for the role of the Internet in the future of democracy (Hart, 2011). NN is defined as "...the principle that In-

* Prof.dr.sc. Mato Brautović, redoviti profesor, Sveučilište u Dubrovniku,
E-mail: mbraut@unidu.hr

ternet Access Providers (ISPs) do not censor or otherwise manage content which individual users are attempting to access. This means that telecoms should not block or ‘throttle’ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP, e.g., Skype, WhatsApp) or video (e.g., YouTube, BBC iPlayer or Netflix), except under narrowly defined conditions” (Marsden, 2017: 3). Similar, a slightly wider definition is that the NN is the “basic principle that ISPs should not unreasonably discriminate against legal internet traffic and online communication, regardless of its source or destination.” (Pickard and Berman, 2019: 3) By summarizing these two definitions, the concept of the NN includes all types of content coming from any source, or accessed by any audience, through the internet.

The net neutrality debate is characterised by two opposing camps. On the one hand, promoters of net neutrality assert the importance of this concept for free internet development and democracy and, on the other, private sector representatives (ISPs) who want to limit net neutrality in the form of new sources of revenue and moving the cost of internet traffic to websites and platforms that are the source of the traffic. The NN debate gradually evolved from the academic/ICT area in the early 2000s to the political mainstream, with great public awareness and a central place in different media reports, mainly after December, 2010, when the United States FCC (Federal Communication Commission) adopted the first net neutrality rules.

The US NN debate is strongly based on the liberal-conservative partisan divide (Hart, 2011) where Republicans are opposing net neutrality, while Democrats are looking to preserve the “open Internet”. The United States NN debate has been extensively researched (Hart, 2011; Kim, Chung and Kim, 2011; Ly, MacDonald and Toze, 2012; Herman and Kim, 2014; Faris et al, 2016; Lee, Sang and Wang Xu, 2015), while the European debate has fallen behind by several years (Cave and Crocioni, 2011), and researchers were focused on “broad objectives such as maintaining the openness of the internet” and “a range of possible harms to consumers” (Cave and Crocioni, 2011).

Croatia and net neutrality

Croatian regulatory framing is in line with the EU Directives 2009/136/EC, EU 2009/140/EC, Regulation (EC) No. 1211/2009, and Regulation (EU) No. 2015/2120, and this has been the situation from the moment that Croatia entered the EU on July 1, 2013. That doesn’t mean that different policy actors haven’t tried to influence national policy or adopt anti-NN practices, or that the Croatian regulatory authority for network industries (HAKOM) consistently applies EU rules.

The first Croatian attempt to regulate net neutrality can be found in a document “Strategy for Broadband Development in the Republic of Croatia for 2012-2015”.

The Working Group for the Drafting of the Proposal of the Strategy for Broadband Development in the Republic of Croatia, which was established by the Minister of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure, was formed on November 27, 2008. (Croatian Government, 2011)

This Strategy confirms the application of net neutrality “depending on the future development of the relevant regulatory framework of the European Union following a previous market analysis procedure” (Croatian Government, 2011: 10).

“The application of the principle of service and technological neutrality, as one of the basic principles underlying this Strategy, is aimed at achieving the following:

- not giving preference to any particular type of service or technology,
- ensuring conditions for balanced development and the building of infrastructure for broadband access on the basis of the principle of openness, equality and compliance with the legislative framework,
- encouraging supply and demand for services that will be provided on the basis of broadband infrastructure,
- ensuring effective competition in the electronic communications sector” (Croatian Government, 2011: 10).

According to the Strategy for Broadband Development in the Republic of Croatia for 2012-2015, Croatian users had problems with the non-transparent and discriminatory activities of “limiting the use of applications and services selected by end-users, and the equal treatment of the entire internet traffic passing through the network” (Croatian Government, 2011: 10). Due to this, the Croatian government was asking that net neutrality be protected by using broadband “measures for managing network traffic”, which “must be proportionate and appropriate and may not contain unjustified discrimination” (Croatian Government, 2011: 10).

In 2012, Croatian Telecom (HT), which has a relative monopoly on Croatian broadband and the mobile market (HAKOM, 2018), altered the Terms of Use for the way that “HT reserves the right to disable the use of VoIP and MoIP services. HT will apply these prohibitions from January 31, 2013” (Ivančić, 2012). In this pre-EU period, clearly, NN rules were not embedded in Croatian telecom policy. “Therefore, a situation in which politicians are shouting that the net should be neutral, Internet service providers are dumbfounded. It’s quite clear that there should be mechanisms that government will use in the event of a violation of net neutrality” (Bebić & Brautović, 2011: 204).

All public debate about limiting or suspending net neutrality rules has become irrelevant since the Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications (BEREC) drafted the *Guidelines on the Implementation by the National Regulators of European Net Neutrality Rules Regulation (EU) No. 2015/2120* in August, 2016.

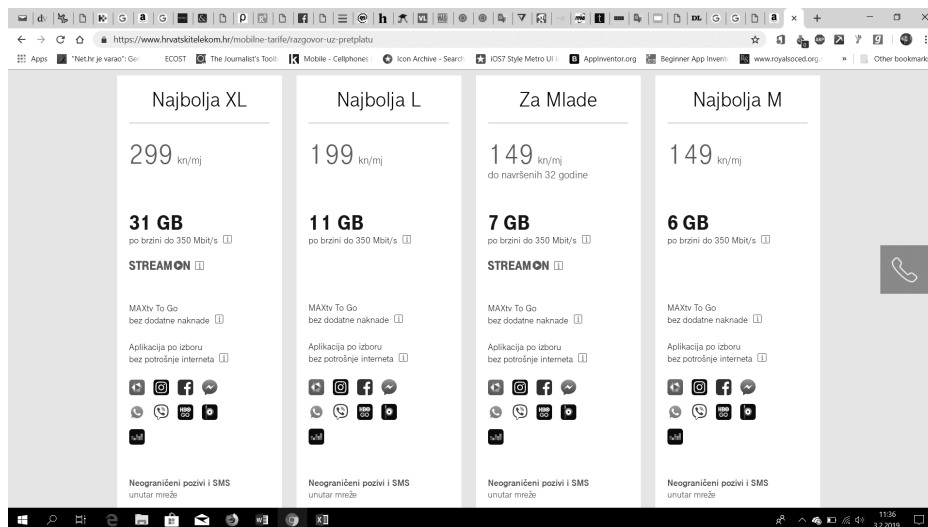


Figure 1 The print screen of the Croatian Telecom web offer that includes breaching zero-rating rules; captured on February 3, 2019

Slika 1. Snimka zaslona web stranice Hrvatskog telekoma koja sadrži kršenje pravila “zero-rating”; snimljeno 3. veljače 2019. godine

Based on the EU Guidelines, the Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries has an obligation to monitor:

- Zero rated services and port blocking (formal assessments of traffic management practices),
- Specialised services (information requested from ISPs),
- Transparency and information measures (market surveys without requesting information from ISPs). (BEREC, 2017)

Based on the BEREC Guidelines, in June, 2017, HAKOM published the first report on net neutrality for the period from 30 April, 2016, to 30 April, 2017. HAKOM also developed the applications HAKOMetar and HAKOMetar Plus for measuring broadband and mobile networks’ speeds, together with blocking ports. Additionally, they checked the zero rated service at one ISP and proposed changes in the Law on Electronic Communications to introduce fines for ISPs that limit internet traffic and discriminate against users and services (HAKOM, 2017).

In the second report for the period from 1 May, 2017, to 30 April 2018, HAKOM concluded “...that timely addressing of the problem and discussion with market stakeholders has the desired influence. The result of the overall picture of the state of net neutrality in the Republic of Croatia is generally positive. Therefore, the De-

cree [EU Directives] and the relevant [BEREC] Guidelines proved the justification of their adoption. In cases where non-compliance with the network neutrality rule has been violated, the ISP concerned has been able to find a solution to resolve the existing irregularity after consultation with HAKOM.”

Although, the rules existed, HAKOM never reported, in the Croatian version of the report, who had violated the BEREC rules. In a report sent to BEREC, HAKOM stated that they “...initiated a formal investigation of Vipnet’s zero rated VIP NOW streaming offer. HAKOM concluded that this offer was not in line with Regulation (EU) 2015/2120, because the service can freely be accessed after the exhaustion of the user’s data cap, while all other internet traffic is charged. After a warning by HAKOM, VIP adjusted its offer to comply with HAKOM’s interpretation of the Regulation” (BEREC, 2017). Besides VIPNet, Croatian Telecom also offers zero rating services (StreamOn).

As seen in Figure 1, this discriminatory practice still exists at the time of writing this paper.

Policy debate and the role of the media

Public policy is a process that is based on “the combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold or influence government positions of authority” (Gerston, 2014: 7). It is influenced by two dimensions of the policy process: its character and the labelling of specific problems, the institutions and the policy actors. The main influence of the media on the policy process is in the field of policy debate. According to Voltimer and Koch-Baumgarten (2010: 6), the policy debate represents “the cognitive processes of identifying, selecting and prioritising problems and linking them to particular values.” Whether an issue is going to be part of the policy agenda will depend “not only on its significance, but also on how it is labelled and interpreted” (Voltimer and Koch-Baumgarten, 2010: 4).

“The media’s role in the policy process depends on a variety of conditions that moderate degree and the kind of influence they can exert on policymakers” (Voltimer and Koch-Baumgarten, 2010: 4). Consequently, as a result of media logic and media bias, the media “systematically limit the range of policy choices that can be publicly legitimated” (Voltimer and Koch-Baumgarten, 2010: 8).

Similarly, Paul A. Sabatier (2007: 3) noticed that, normally, there are “...hundreds of actors from interest groups, governmental agencies, legislatures at different levels of government, researchers, journalists, and judges involved in one or more aspects of the process. Each of these actors (either individual or corporate) has potentially different values/interests, perceptions of the situation, and policy preferences.” Those actors will influence policy-makers by “controlling their access to and use of

information relevant to those actions” (Gandy, 1982: 61). Kim, Chung and Kim (2011: 316) found that “mass media coverage, industry representatives, and scholars’ activities serve as easily accessible sources of information for policy-makers dealing with relatively new policy agenda: net neutrality.” They also suggest that policy makers will use information provided by them to define the problem and solutions for it (Kim, Chung and Kim, 2011: 316).

Policy-making in Croatia

The EU accession process significantly influenced the transparency of policy-making in Croatia. In the period from 2009 to 2013 the policy-making process was more formalised, and several important laws were adopted that led to more responsiveness by the government to include citizens and other policy actors in creating policies (Vidačak and Kotarski, 2019). As a part of this effort, the Croatian government started a specialised platform for e-consultancy (esavjetovanja.gov.hr), which allowed the wider public and the media to be better informed about policy-making (Vidačak and Kotarski, 2019).

However, there is evidence that informal access and lobbying are still dominantly used by the biggest corporations, professional associations and unions, the Catholic Church, etc. These policy actors “are usually more able to pursue informal, insider, lobbying tactics and rely on their close friends and associates in government to pursue their goals” (Vidačak and Kotarski, 2019: 97).

Research questions

This study explores the NN policy debate in Croatia, and the role of policy actors in it, through the following research questions:

RQ1: Was there a debate on net neutrality in the Croatian public sphere in the 2010-2018 period?

RQ2: What were the positions of (online) media reports in the 2010-2018 NN debate in Croatia?

RQ3: To what extent does the NN debate in Croatia echo the issues that were brought forward in the United States and EU?

Methodology

This study uses a combination of digital methods, document analysis and content analysis. For this study, we adopted a methodology, proposed by Herman and Kim

(2014), that includes the the use of Issue Crawler to identify the most authoritative websites discussing NN, to identify relevant advocacy documents and news stories. The proposed methodology had to be modified regarding the use of Issue Crawler and the initial list of websites that were used for the search. As there was no previous research on the topic of NN in Croatia, the initial “seed” of 62 websites was created from Google Search results on the keywords “internet neutralnost” (English “net neutrality”; without quotation marks). The search resulted in a list of 154 websites that was reduced to 62 websites/platforms when we excluded Bosnian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Polish websites, duplicates and social media. The initial computing on Issue Crawler, based on the 62 websites/platforms, showed a network without incoming links, so we couldn’t use it to identify each site’s relative authority.

The social media were excluded from the initial list because the search resulted in only a few results containing comments from regular users, but not from official sources. Further searching, via a native search on Twitter and Facebook, showed that they were not used for debate on net neutrality.

Consequently, to determine authority on the NN issue, we used the Lippmannian Device which creates a “ranking of particular sources within search engine results” (Borra, 2016). The Lippmannian Device produced a tag cloud of the distribution of mentions, ordered by volume of mentions in Google Search, for the query “internet neutralnost” (without quotation marks). Based on the tag cloud, the list of websites was further reduced to 28, and these were ones that contained at least two mentions of the keywords “internet neutralnost”.

A targeted Google Search of the 28 websites (Table 2) for the query “internet neutralnost” was used to identify stories/documents for content analysis, following the guidelines developed by Herman and Kim (2014). The guidelines limited the retrieving of documents to “up to 40 relevant documents or all of the relevant documents from the first 100 Google results for each site“(Herman and Kim, 2014).

To discover who the policy actors are who are influencing the debate about net neutrality by providing information to the media and policy-makers, the content analysis was updated with content analysis categories that were proposed by Kim, Chung and Kim (2011). The content analysis categories used for this paper were: type of medium, origin of posting, sources, affiliations, full name of source and inclination.

Findings

RQ1: Croatian 2010-2018 debate on net neutrality

What characterised the analysed period (2010-2018) is that there was almost no public debate about net neutrality. As far as we know, there were several events/

discussions organised by HAKOM, the activist organisation Women Techmakers Croatia, and the professional association, the Croatian Society for Information and Communication Technology, Electronics and Microelectronics (MIPRO), but none of them caused great public interest.

HAKOM organised two e-debates (e-rasprave.hakom.hr) on the topic of net neutrality, in 2011 and 2014. Both were initiated through the electronic system for e-debates and, after each, there was a concluding offline panel. The first one, on the topic “Internet and net neutrality” was held from January 13 to February 28, 2011, and the second on the topic “Internet Policy and Internet Governance; The Role of Europe in Shaping the Future of Internet Management”, was held from March 13 to March 28, 2014. In the first, 5 individuals/organisations expressed their opinions, while, in the second, 3 individuals/organisations expressed theirs. In both debates, HT submitted a written letter expressing “the rights of Internet service providers to freely manage the service, above all to freely manage Internet traffic and to have the freedom to prioritise Internet traffic for the purpose of network resource optimisation. In doing so, any traffic management measures or net neutrality measures, need to be balanced between, on one side, the ultimate user’s freedom to access content, services, and applications and, on the other, the ability of the operator to develop new services with the included QoS” (HT, 2014). Other than HT, views on NN were expressed by the ISP VIPNet and the academic non-profit ISP CARNet (Croatian Academic and Research Network), as well as experts, academics and activists.

In the 2014 debate, the ISP, VIPNet, expressed a more blurred view, saying that “the policy of the Internet and Internet Governance should first and foremost guarantee the encouragement of the new investment cycles of electronic communications service operators and ensure the freedom to provide new innovative services that will ensure the continued growth of the Internet, broadband coverage, and, indirectly, economic growth.” (VIPNet, 2014) On the other hand, the academic ISP, CARNet, insisted that NN “...is imperative within the legal and regulatory framework to prevent network operators, through their own service models, exercising absolute control over the communication channel and thus discriminating (or removing) competition and obliging subscribers to buy their otherwise uncompetitive services. Network neutrality is the key to preserving existing freedoms.” (CARNet, 2011)

An important debate on net neutrality in Croatia happened during 2 of the 4 Internet Governance Forums (CRO-IGF) that were organised by MIPRO, HAKOM, CARNet, the Ministries of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure, Public Administration, Foreign and European Affairs, the University of Zagreb, Ericsson Nikola Tesla, the Croatian Employers’ Association and the NGO, HROpen.

The first CRO-IGF forum was held on May 6, 2015, and, although it had been announced, “HAKOM decided to remove the Network Neutrality topic from the agen-

Table 1 Public Debates on Net Neutrality in Croatia in the Period 2010-2018
Tablica 1. Javne rasprave o neutralnosti interneta u Hrvatskoj u period 2010.-2018.

| DATE | DEBATE/EVENT | Participants |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| February 1, 2018 | Panel “Net Neutrality” organised by Women Techmakers Croatia | Leina Meštrović (Internet activists) |
| June 1, 2016 | 2. Internet Governance Forums (CRO-IGF) organised by MIPRO, HAKOM, CARNet, the Ministries of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure, Public Administration, Foreign and European Affairs, the University of Zagreb, Ericsson Nikola Tesla, the Croatian Employers’ Association and the NGO HROpen. | Zdravko Jukić (HAKOM) Mr. sc. Milan Živković (Ericsson Nikola Tesla) Igor Barlek (VIPNet) Kristijan Zimmer (HrOpen - Croatian Society for Open Systems and Internet) Zdravko Jukić (HAKOM, Krešo Antonović (Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure) |
| January 25, 2016 | Panel “Benefits and opportunities in the single EU market” organised by HAKOM & MIPRO | Davor Tomašković (HT) Adrian Ježina (VIPNet) Renata Suša (HŽ Infrastructure d.o.o.) Ivica Kranjčić (Croatian post) Domagoj Jurjević (HAKOM) Veronica Bocarova (Cullen International) |
| May 28, 2014 | Panel “The Future of Internet Management” organised by MIPRO and HAKOM | N/A |
| March 13 to March 28, 2014. | E-debate “Internet Policy and Internet Management; The role of Europe in shaping the future of internet management” organised by HAKOM | HT VIPNet d.o.o. |
| January 13 to February 28, 2011 | E-debate “Internet and net neutrality” organised by HAKOM | Ivan Marić (SRCE) Ivo Špigel (Prepetuum Mobile d.o.o., HUP) Prof Maja Matijašević (FER) Marko Rakar (Initium, CROWD, pollitika.com) Tomislav Medak (mi2, Creative Commons Croatia team) Mr. sc. Mario Weber (HAKOM) HT VIPNet d.o.o. |

da” (CRO-IGF, 2015). The second CRO-IGF forum had net neutrality as the central topic. It was organised on June 1, 2016, and the general view was that “...less regulation is better than more regulation, was supported by the industry. Regulation interventions should only happen when there is a market failure that the market itself cannot correct. There it is important not to look at the behaviour of a particular player but at the market in general, keeping in mind the state of the competition and the end user benefits, in particular, the possibility of the users choosing the services they want” (CRO-IGF, 2016).

Net neutrality wasn’t mentioned at the 2017 and 2018 Internet Governance Forums. The final reports from those forums reported that a limited number of people participated in the events and that they “would need to get more participation from civil society and Internet users in future events” (CRO-IGF, 2015; CRO-IGF, 2016).

There was a limited debate during HAKOM’s “Market Day”, under the panel “Benefits and Opportunities in the Single EU market” in January, 2016, when participants from government, the private sector and academia discussed the proposed EU regulation regarding net neutrality. The last event, the topic of which was “Net Neutrality”, was organised by the NGO Women Techmakers Croatia, in February, 2018, but the discussion was about the new EU copyright law that would lead to mandatory automatic filtering of all uploads onto the internet.

RQ2: Croatian media coverage and positions on NN

The websites with the highest volume of the (in Croatian “internet neutralnost”) keywords “net neutrality” were the three leading national newspapers: 24sata.hr, jutarnji.hr and vecernji.hr. Thereafter it was the online medium that is owned by Croatian Telecom - tportal.hr. Figure 2 shows the tag cloud of search results, which was based on the volume of indexed keywords.

Based on the Lippmannian Device tag cloud, we created a list of websites and, based on their rank, we selected the most relevant websites in the Croatian network

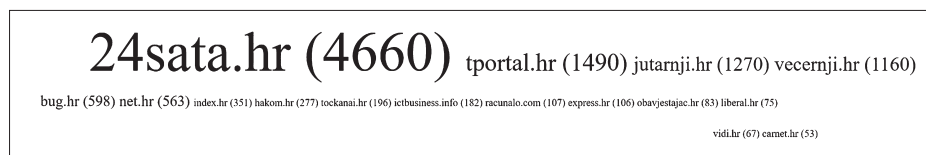


Figure 2 Volume of net neutrality keywords (internet neutralnost) in Google Search per website

Slika 2. Frekvencija ključnih riječi neutralnost interneta u rezultatima Google pretraživanja

sphere on net neutrality. The list included the traditional media outlets (24sata.hr, jutarnji.hr, vecernji.hr, dnevnik.hr, glasistre.hr), tech media organisations (bug.hr, tockanai.hr, ictbusiness.info, racunalo.com, pcchip.hr, netokracija.com, geek.hr, vidi.hr), government (HAKOM), activists (gong.hr, liberal.hr), academia (srce.unizg.hr), online media (dnevno.hr, net.hr, index.hr, express.hr, obavjestajac.hr, telegram.hr, usporedi.hr, preporucamo.com, advance.hr), and ISPs (tportal.hr, carnet.hr). 24sata, Jutarnji list and Večernji list are the leading national daily newspapers, while dnevnik.hr is the online edition of the national TV network NOVA TV. Glas Istre is a regional daily newspaper in the North Western part of Croatia. Bug.hr, pcchip.hr and vidi.hr are leading tech magazines, while tockanai.hr, ictbusiness.info, racunalo.com, netokracija.com and geek.hr are exclusively tech online media. Net.hr, Index.hr and telegram.hr are leading general online media. Carnet.hr is a website run by the CARNet. Gong.hr and liberal.hr are activists' websites with a liberal ideology. Gong is an NGO political activist organisation with the goal of promoting transparency, openness and human rights in the Croatian public sphere.

Table 2 Initial list of websites/platforms used for content analysis on net neutrality
Tablica 2. Inicijalna lista web stranica/platformi koje su analizirane analizom sadržaja

| | |
|---------------|----|
| NGO/Activists | 2 |
| Government | 1 |
| ISPs | 2 |
| Academia | 1 |
| Mass media | 5 |
| Tech media | 8 |
| Online media | 9 |
| TOTAL | 28 |

Using a targeted Google Search for the most relevant websites, we discovered 2199 documents/stories containing the keywords “net neutrality”. Due to the limitations of the Google indexing spider, many of the documents found were irrelevant for the analysis. Documents were dropped from the analysis that were duplicates, collections (pages) that contained lists of documents based on tags (net neutrality) or an author’s name, internal search results and print versions, etc. After excluding the irrelevant documents, a detailed content analysis was carried out on a total of 144 documents/stories. The sample included stories from tportal.hr (24), bug.hr (15), dnevnik.hr (15), ictbusiness.info (12), vecernji.hr (12), index.hr (9), net.hr (9), racu-

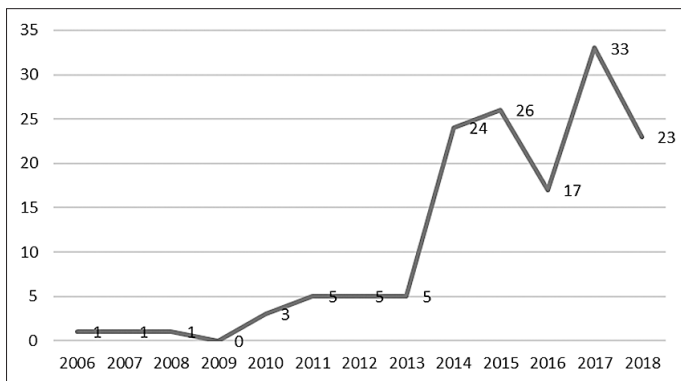


Figure 3 Volume of NN stories per year 2006-2018

Slika 3. Frekvencija NN objava po godinama u period 2006.-2018.

nalo.com (9), telegram.hr (8), netokracija.com (5), jutarnji.hr (5), 24sata.hr (5) and others (18 stories).

The years with the highest number of stories that mentioned net neutrality were 2014, 2015 and 2017 (Figure 3).

The analysed stories' stance was pro-NN. Of 144 stories, more than half (79) were pro-net neutrality, while only 18 (12.5%) were against net neutrality (Figure 4). 47 stories were neutral, regarding net neutrality. 11 of 18 anti-NN stories were published on the online medium tportal.hr (Figure 5), which is owned by Croatian Telecom.

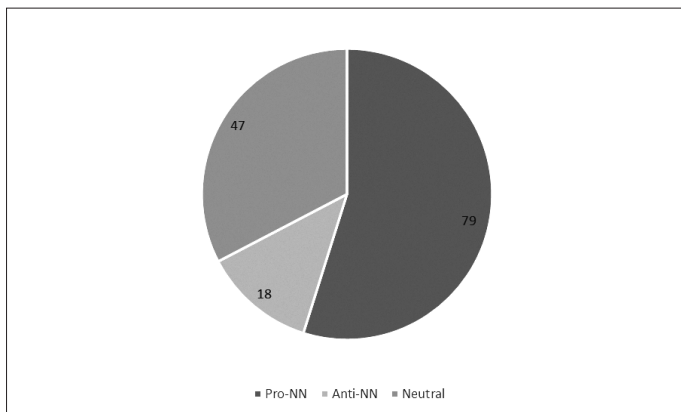


Figure 4 Story stances on net neutrality

Slika 4. Stajališta o NN izražena u analiziranim objavama

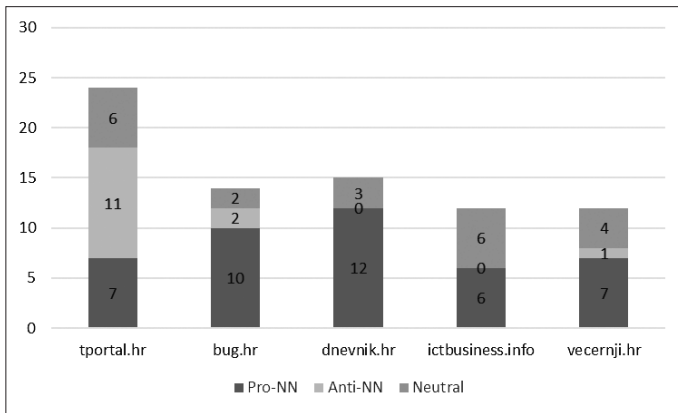


Figure 5 Story stances on net neutrality for websites with the highest number of stories in the sample

Slika 5. Stajališta o NN izražena u analiziranim objavama za webstranice s najvećim brojem objava

RQ3: Echoing the NN debate from the USA and the EU

The data showed that there were 72 stories that referenced the issues of net neutrality in the United States of America, 54 that referenced the EU, and 29 Croatia (Figure 6). The most mentioned US events were Barack Obama’s stance on net neutral-

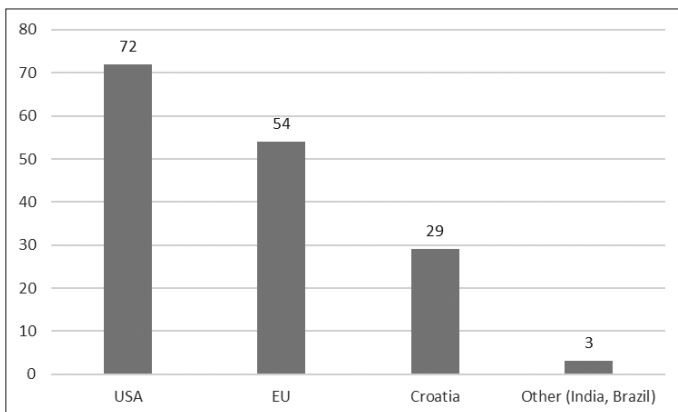


Figure 6 Origin of NN topics/events mentioned in story

Slika 6. Izvori NN tema/događaja navedenim u analiziranim objavama

ity in November, 2014; the FCC decision on regulating net neutrality in February, 2015, and the FCC decision to revoke the same decision in December, 2017. The EU event with the highest interest from Croatian media was the EU Parliament's decision to protect net neutrality, in October, 2015. Popular Croatian events were offline debates/conferences on net neutrality in February, 2011, January, 2016, and January, 2018. A high volume of coverage by the Croatian media attracted changes in Croatian telecoms' Terms of Use in June, 2012, when they reserved "the right to disable the use of VoIP and MoiP services", starting from January, 2013.

The most popular sources mentioned in stories were government institutions, like the national regulatory bodies in the USA (FCC), the EU (BEREC), and Croatia (HAKOM), the EU Commission and the EU Parliament, with a total of 87 mentions. Activists had 43 mentions and ISPs 28 mentions (Figure 7).

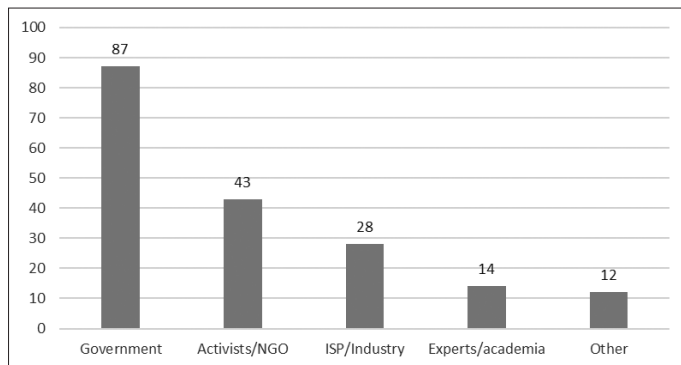


Figure 7 Sources (organizations) quoted in the analysed stories
Slika 7. Izvori (organizacije) citirani u analiziranim objavama

The most quoted person was one of the Internet's founders, Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the Chairman of the United States Federal Communications Commission, Ajit Pai, the Croatian expert and activist, Đuro Lubura, and the politicians Angela Merkel, Neelie Kroes, Mignon Clyburn and Barack Obama (Figure 8). Of the 144 stories analysed, 75 didn't have any source or person quoted by name. The media used ISPs (HT) as sources in 7 stories, but in only one story was the source assigned a full name and affiliation. Other stories mentioning HT as the source were marked only with the affiliation.

The most popular affiliations mentioned in the stories were government institutions and regulators: the FCC, the EU Commission, the EU Parliament, HAKOM and BEREC. The activists' organisations: the NGOs Telekom and Le Quadrature du Net and the ISP, Croatian Telecom followed (Figure 9).



Figure 8 The sources (people) quoted in analysed stories

Slika 8. Izvori (osobe) citirani u analiziranim objavama



Figure 9 Affiliation mentioned in the analysed stories

Slika 9. Povezanost navedena u analiziranim objavama

Discussion

From these results, we see that offline debate about net neutrality was limited. The Croatian regulator (HAKOM) organised several panels and conferences to discuss issues of net neutrality, but these did not attract the attention of the general public and the mainstream media. Internet activists didn't use online tools to mobilise more pro-NN participants into the debate. This is especially visible in HAKOM e-debate attempts, which were followed by a negligible number of participants. The e-debates failed to attract the mainstream media or to generate wider public interest in the topic.

One of the possible answers to why public attention was absent, can be found in the selection of the debates' participants. The seats on panels and conferences were reserved for government officials, industry representatives (HT, VIPNet) and academics who are close to the ICT sector (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing - FER, University Computer Centre - SRCE, CARNET). Pro-NN activists were almost invisible, and their role was taken by more ICT oriented NGOs, like HROpen or Creative Commons Croatia. E-debates were also run on the HAKOM platform for e-debates (e-rasprave.hakom.hr), instead of on the general platform that the Croatian government had launched (esavjetovanja.gov.hr). Certainly, the Croatian government e-debate platform would have attracted more participants and more diverse participation.

The highest volumes of stories were in those years when debates in the US and the EU were prominent, and the Croatian media reports were reactions to these debates. While more than half the stories reported were about the NN debate in the USA, only 20% (29 of 144) were related to Croatian events/debate. The majority of Croa-

tian net neutrality stories were announcements for offline public events on NN, reports about discriminatory policies by Croatian ISPs and interviews with prominent Croatian experts and industry leaders. The government sources were present in 60% of analysed stories, with the dominance of the FCC and European institutions, which is in line with previous data. The results demonstrate higher non-governmental organisational presence, while telecom companies are relatively silent. HT was used as the source in 7 stories, and only one was signed with the full name and the affiliation of the person who was quoted. As noticed by Herman and Kim (2014) “corporate spokespersons generally do not speak too freely” in order to avoid bad publicity (Hart, 2011). Instead, in the Croatian public sphere, they use the very popular tportal.hr to demonstrate their NN views.

The dominant sources of net neutrality information were the traditional mainstream media and general online media. The tech media organisations didn’t report as much as we would have expected. Although more than half of the analysed stories were pro-NN, the media have missed the opportunity to engage the general public in the debate about net neutrality and to make the policy-making process, in this instance, more transparent and visible.

Conclusion

Findings on the Croatian debate on net neutrality show two parallel debates and policy-making processes: one that is happening in the mainstream and online media, with dominance of international topics and actors (USA, EU), and, secondly, that the NN debate is hidden from the Croatian public sphere, which is happening at panels and conferences, and these are mainly organised by HAKOM.

Although most of the mainstream media reported positively about net neutrality, they failed to bring the processes of policy making and NN debate closer to the general public, as was the case in the USA or the rest of Europe.

This study had several limitations. The analysis of the NN debate in the offline environment was analysed based on media reports and government documents. The study also excluded print and broadcast media reports on the topic.

To gain better insights about the behind-the-scene processes, ethnographic research should be undertaken. Similarly to Hiram and Kim (2014), the analysed websites “understate the political significance of documents on”, for example, the HAKOM website. Many issues documented in these findings should be further clarified by in-depth interviews with policy-making actors.

Further research should include the use of social media in debating NN and its general influence on the policy-making process in Croatia. As we know from studies in

the USA and Western Europe, the Internet is helping underrepresented groups and activists to mobilise the general public and shape policy outcomes, but the analysed sample managed to capture only a small part of this.

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Rasprave o javnim politikama mrežne neutralnosti u Hrvatskoj: Izvorišta i politički akteri

Mato Brautović

SAŽETAK

Ova studija predstavlja raspravu o neutralnosti mreže (NN) u hrvatskoj javnoj sferi, njezinu nastanku i povezanosti sa sličnim raspravama u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama i Europskoj uniji. Studija također pokušava odgovoriti na pitanje tko su akteri javnih politika koji utječu na debatu o net neutralnosti, kako se odvijao proces donošenja javne politike o NN-u te koja je uloga medija. Empirijski podaci prikupljeni su iz dokumenata i objava na internetskim stranicama vlade, medija, nevladinih organizacija i industrije. Podaci pokazuju dvije paralelne debate o neutralnosti mreže i karakteru hrvatskog procesa stvaranja javnih politika: debata koja se događa u mainstream i online medijima s dominacijom međunarodnih tema i aktera (SAD, EU) i druga debata koja je skrivena od hrvatske javne sfere, a koja se odvija na panelima i konferencijama koje uglavnom organizira Hrvatska regulatorna agencija za mrežne djelatnosti. Iako su mainstream mediji pozitivno izvijestili o neutralnosti mreže, oni nisu uspjeli približiti proces kreiranja javnih politika i debate o NN javnosti kao što je to bio slučaj u SAD-u ili u Zapadnoj Europi.

Ključne riječi: neutralnost mreže, Hrvatska, proces donošenja javnih politika, e-debate, digitalne metode