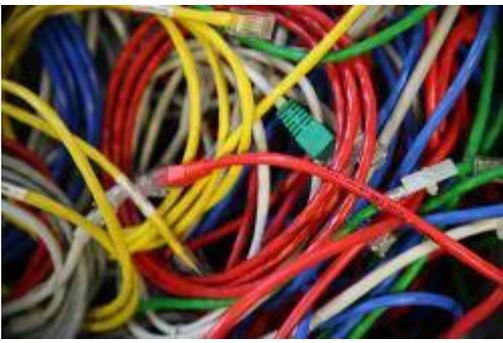


# **NET NEUTRALITY: SORRY, BUT IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE**

*Posted on 16/11/2010 by Naider*

## Net Neutrality: Excuse me, but It's not that simple



Today [the country picked up the news on the motion presented by the PP](#) before the Senate in which the neutrality of the telecommunications operators is requested to be respected. A neutrality that says that it must *"ensure that the data packets that circulate through its networks always receive the same treatment, without priority or hierarchy, regardless of their content, origin, destination or protocol, and without filtering the traffic to privilege, demote, limit or prevent access to any pages or services"*. Again, **discrimination of any kind is crossed out as negative and it is also quoted that all protocols should be treated in the same way** being this point where they are most confused.

**It could be that simple, but unfortunately it's not.** To understand why it is not so simple, let's imagine, for a moment, that this principle of neutrality were applied to highways. What we are saying is that a person (content) with any origin and destination (Madrid and Barcelona for example) should receive the same treatment. However, **the protocol here would be like the vehicle we travel in:** would we let a driver with a 15m-wide harvester travel down a highway at 20km/h? The combine would create a huge traffic jam by limiting speed and access for others, this would force a lot more money to be invested in having much wider highways, which would have an impact on the price that all highway users (or worse, all taxpayers) would pay. ).

This situation is what occurs or may occur in telecommunications networks. Services such as P2P or the download of files with enormous amounts of data (videos, music, etc.) **can generate traffic jams for information that is much more sensitive to "real time": telephony, videoconferencing, etc..** In this case, discrimination means that users enjoy a better service and at a lower price, since Telecoms can discriminate traffic, giving priority to real-time data and not necessarily having to invest to have wider and wider networks.

**The problem with the net neutrality debate is that it tries to oversimplify:** the key is not to guarantee net neutrality *by law* but to ensure that Internet operators telecommunications do not abuse their market power and misuse discriminatory tactics. Net neutrality should not mean eliminating any discrimination, as **there are positive discriminations that increase the quality, security and efficiency of communications.** Traffic discrimination is like cholesterol: there is good and bad. But not only that, but a certain discrimination can be good for a group of users and counterproductive for others...

[Jon M. Peha](#) professor at Carnegie Mellon University and Chief Technologist of the FCC does an in-depth look at the pros and cons of discrimination, and its types, [in this article](#), which I highly recommend reading.

Please, let's not simplify.

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