Chapter 12

Freedom, Control, Security: Current and Future Implications for Internet Governance

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ABSTRACT

Internet Governance is concerned with the organisation, control, and strategic development of the Internet. It is a prominent and widely debated topic. Furthermore, from the operational perspective, administrative control and technical operation of the Internet are crucially relevant issues for the global dissemination of information, online virtual communities and the global economy. Therefore political and technological aspects and considerations are interconnected and cannot be separated. Key Internet operation and maintenance organisations such as the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) are stakeholders in the process of defining the scope and agenda of future Internet governance with significant implications for virtual communities and online services. These developments have a major impact and are omnipresent in the operation of the Internet with additional implications regarding Internet security and control aspects inside Internet groups and communities. Governance and security are issues motivated by the need of protection - protection from perceived chaos and instability, real physical or symbolic violence or even terrorism. However, the question of who governs and secures the Internet against such threats remains an open issue. Furthermore, it must be asked who will protect us from security. These issues are discussed from different perspectives at different scales. The Botnet case study further demonstrates how control is distributed both horizontally and vertically in keeping with contemporary forms of governance and security, reflected in the technical infrastructures of the Internet itself.

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INTRODUCTION

Then there is electricity — the demon, the angel, the mighty physical power, the all-pervading intelligence... Is that a humbug too? Is it a fact... that, by means of electricity, the world of matter has become a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles in a breathless point of time? Rather, the round globe is a vast head, a brain instinct with intelligence! Or shall we say it is itself a thought, nothing but thought, and no longer the substance which we deemed it!

If you mean the telegraph... it is an excellent thing — that is, of course, if the speculators in cotton and politics don’t get possession of it. A great thing... particularly as regards the detection of bank robbers and murderers. (Hawthorne, 1851)

The thoughts of the writer Nathaniel Hawthorne were inspired by the development of electricity and the telegraph in the mid 19th century. Much as Jules Verne envisioned extensive journeys and moon landings, Hawthorne tried to foresee the contradictory possibilities of electronic communication. Hawthorne speculates that global connectivity may lead to new horizons, a claim that has been repeated with regards to the Internet by more contemporary commentators (Lessig, 2006; Mitchell, 1996). Given the widespread use and alleged pervasiveness, the questions of how to develop, operate and control the Internet involves the controversial and complex issue of governance.

The term governance derives from the Greek verb κυβερνάω (kubernáo) meaning to steer (and thus also making reference to cybernetics) and generally politics provides the means by which the governance process is operated (Wikipedia, 2010). Conceiving of Internet governance in this way, one can encounter the process in States and State organisations, profit and non-profit corporations, NGOs and other associations (e.g. social networks, project-teams) engaged in the general operation, management and control of Internet-related activities (Marsden, 2008). A number of regulators impact upon the process and define the role and limitation of Internet Governance; for instance compare the issues relating to Architecture, Market, Norms and Regulation in Figure 1 (Lessig, 2006: 123). These different aspects clearly impact upon governance and confirm it as a political issue, for example in the social costs of the Internet. Solum further identifies cybersquatting as a prime

Figure 1. Internet governance regulators
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