Finding Order in a Contentious Internet

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Problem

In 1998 an attempt to remove an offensive video blocked YouTube for most of the Internet...network operators resolved the issue in three hours. Spamhaus disseminates authoritative spam blocking lists, performing a vetting function while distributing monitoring and enforcement effort. Non-state collectives are increasingly playing function-specific Internet governance roles, often competing with conventional governance modes. Despite demonstrated operational and decisional capacity, little is known about how this capacity develops or how it is maintained. This research is an empirical, comparative analysis of governance arrangements and the implications for the ongoing design and operations of the Internet.

Key Questions

- Why do actors in these governance arrangements operate?
- What elements of structure and process reinforce cooperation and contribute to operational capacity?
- Are these patterns durable, not simply one-off events?
- How contingent are patterns on the public, private, or hybrid character of the organization modes in which they are embedded?
- What factors contribute to dynamic efficiency?
- How do these governance arrangements interact with conventional modes of governance? How do they compare?
- What contributes to legitimacy, authority, and accountability in these arrangements?

Methodology

Social Network Analysis (structure)• Attendee lists (figure to right)
• E-mail speakers
• Policy co-authors

Text Mining (structure, process)• Concept clusters in documents
• Actors related by common interests

Cases and Interviews (process, mechanisms)• Identity policy and issue communities
• Observation of the community
• Surface causal mechanisms

The Research

Institution Landscape and Boundaries

Two simple dimensions of institutions are (1) formality and (2) the mix and influence of public and private actors. This space illustrates the variety of organizational modes at play. Institutions are placed approximately, polygons represent the sets of governance mechanisms used by organizations and, importantly, the overlap. The red line represents the boundary, and interface, between bottom-up and top-down arrangements.

Preliminary Results

Emergent governance arrangements == private regimes
- Regime components
- NOGs serve as informal information exchanges, reducing community uncertainty
- RIRs engage in monitoring and some enforcement
- Evidence of a broad, pluralistic marketplace of governance arrangements
- Variety of accountability mechanisms
- Confirmation of client-constituent spectrum
- Interface with top-down arrangements
- Active collaboration with states and IGO’s
- Collaborating organizational modes are not isomorphic

Remaining Research

Theory Building
- Preliminary results provide sufficient evidence to develop an expanded theory of private authority (chapter 3)
- Develop criteria for testing theory

Analysis
- Social network metric development
- Identify and extract issue and community clusters from documents
- Evaluate social networks and communities over time

Idiographic Studies
- Function-specific organizations
- Asia-Pacific region communities
- Revist North America and EU
- ICANN and IGF?
- Africa and Latin America/South America?

Thank You!

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