Book Reviews

Reviewed by Evika Karamagioli

E-mail: karamagioli@gmail.com

Researching Internet Governance – Methods, Frameworks, Futures
   by: Laura DeNardis, Derrick Cogburn, Nanette S. Levinson
   and Francesca Musiani (Eds.)
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Following the definition of internet from O'Hara and Hall (2018) as a "fragile and contingent construction of hardware, software, standards and databases, governed by a wide range of private and public actors whose behaviour is constrained only by voluntary protocols", a huge extension of its content has been shown over the years, along with the expansion of its potential ways of use.

The rapid increase of online data and its accessibility has caused an important number of new services, offering a tone of more or less participatory ways and capabilities of creating, exploring and sharing all kinds of data. The estimation that more data is being generated nowadays than ever before, is supported by the global volume of data predicting it is doubling between 2018 and 2022 and redoubling between 2022 and 2025. This increase of data flows across borders and devices, and has created, along with the consequent data traffic, new forms of crime, abuse, surveillance and social conflict,

which come together with a broad spectrum of performance-degrading infrastructural limitations, while the existing regulatory environment for the internet data management and localisation remains fractured. Additionally, internet-based services built on automated algorithmic selection processes are increasingly influencing, aiding, or replacing human decision-making on multiple life domains. Last but not least, according to the UN Secretary-General António Guterres the global crisis has highlighted the life-changing power of the internet with digital technology enabling millions to work, study and socialise safely online. Yet it has also magnified the digital divide and the dark side of technology, as evidenced by "the lightning-fast spread of misinformation" (United Nations, 2021).

The term 'internet governance' was firstly used in correlation with the governance of internet identifiers – such as domain names and IP addresses – which gradually led to the formation of ICANN. Nevertheless, since the internet has been progressively recognised as a public utility – and as a basic human right in many countries – internet governance englobes a series of challenges and interrelations related to economic, political, social, and military implications (European Commission, 2021). These implications involve infrastructure, security, stability, privacy, intellectual property rights, national sovereignty (for example country domain names) etc.

As internet governance clearly touches the way each one of us and our societies as entities act and react, setting standards and regulatory frameworks for ethical technology development becomes a necessity. This book lies at the heart of the question of how this unresolved puzzle can be done. How can we define principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that will shape the internet's evolution? How can we ensure that it remains an open and decentralised accessible to all? The book offers a multidisciplinary insight on the definition and the evolution of internet governance highlighting both technological and non-technological characteristics, processes, interrelations between law, IT, and public policy.

Laura DeNardis, Derrick Cogburn, Nanette S. Levinson, Francesca Musiani as editors offer a compilation of 13 expert views providing their own perspective on internet governance landscape, ranging from research methods and theories to conceptual approaches.

Thus, the book offers to students and researchers' an important insight on the elements, methods and expected outcomes of designing and performing internet governance research, highlighting the political perspective and barriers. Additionally, it offers policymakers, network-engineers, and technical strategists the possibility to understand different perspectives impacting deeply the meaning of internet governance, the dark points and the elements essential for the development of project and policies. Last but not least, it underlines the potential added value of including academics and researchers in the design and implementation of ongoing and future multi-stakeholder internet Governance processes.

According to the founder of internet World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee and his ambitious plan for online governance (which is designed to counteract the growing prevalence of misinformation, data surveillance and censorship) citizens must hold those in power accountable, demand their digital rights to be respected and encourage healthy conversations online. In order for all of the aforementioned to be achieved, manuscripts like this one are essential. They enhance the existing research on internet governance and they help in finding ways to maintain its original design principles, thus allowing a more dynamic participatory approach to the formulation of next generation of internet standard.

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