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Networks, governance and design – a journey through some historical case studies

Abstract

As famous as the quotation by Lawrence Lessing « Code is law », the sentence by David Clark at a meeting at the IETF in 1992 « We reject kings, presidents and voting, we believe in rough consensus and running code » became a « motto for Internet standardization » (Russell, 2006) that invites us to have a look at the past relationships and intertwinements between networks design and governance. From the 1970s topics related to distribution and openness have become key in networks infrastructures, while complementary issues related to asymmetries and multi-stakeholderism (Raymond and DeNardis 2015) have been emphasized in the 1990s and 2000s, and notably during the WSIS in Tunis and Geneva. Research related to Internet governance (Mueller and Badiei, 2020; Musiani, Schafer, 2021) has also brought to the table strong issues related to agencies, privacy, and many others that have strongly followed the development of networks and their uses as well as controversies related to net neutrality or information flows for example (DeNardis, 2020). This presentation will go through several historical case studies and rethink them through the lens of infrastructure design and governance, from Arpanet in the 1970s, XNS and then the OSI (Russell, 2014), to web archives (Schafer, Winters 2021) and research infrastructures today, through past designs and attempts, related to the Web and Xanadu, the Minitel (Schafer, Thierry, 2012; Mailland, Driscoll, 2017), platforms like Wuala (Musiani, 2022) and Wikipedia (Cardon and Levrel, 2009). This will allow us to explore some notions and approach related to closure, secret, incentives, empowerment, while finally moving from « governance » to « good governance » and its challenges.

Bio

Valérie Schafer has been a Professor in Contemporary European History at the C²DH (Luxembourg Centre for Contemporary and Digital History) at the University of Luxembourg since February 2018. She previously worked at the CNRS in France and is still an Associate Researcher at the Center for Internet and Society (CIS – CNRS UPR 2000). She specialises in the history of computing, telecommunications and data networks. Her main research interests are the history of the Internet and the Web, the history of European digital cultures and infrastructures, and born-digital heritage (especially Web archives).

She is Vice-Chair of the ECREA Communication History Section, a member of the Management Committee of the « Tensions of Europe » network, and General Secretary of the Society for the History of Media (SPHM). She participated to OPERAS-P (H2020, 2019-2021) as a task leader on innovative models of governance, she is involved in the SNF Project Web Historyalbi (USI, Switzerland), in the DFG-FNR funded project Popkult (<https://popkult60.eu/project/>, 2021-2024) and she is one of the co-PI of the WARCnet project (supported by the Independent Research Fund Denmark | Humanities (grant number 9055-00005B)) related to the study of transnational web archives. She is also the PI of the AWAC2 cohort (Analysing Web Archives of the COVID Crisis through the IIPC Novel Coronavirus dataset, 2021-22) which is engaged in collaborative activities with the [Archives Unleashed Project](#) and benefit from its support and mentorship. She is the principal investigator of the [HIVI project](#), a project running from March 2021 to February 2024, which is supported by the Luxembourg National Research Fund (C20/SC/14758148) and dedicated to the history of online virality. She is on the editorial board of the journals *Le Temps des Médias*, *Flux* and *Cahiers François Viète* and she is a co-founder of the journal *Internet Histories. Digital Technology, Culture and Society* (Taylor & Francis). She is a member of the Scientific Board of the Orange Group and of Afnic, the French domain name management company. She is part of the advisory group of [HEXA-X](#) (6G flagship initiative).

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