**THE DIGITAL COMMONS IS A PUBLIC GOOD, BUT IT’S NOT GLOBAL**

There is an absolute need to defend the **Internet /cyberspace as** a public good, and a **common pool resource**.There is an absolute need to defend Internet Governance as an ecosystem. Usually the idea of an “electronic commons” is stated by civil society organizations to mean a dedicated civic “space” that is somehow separated from the Internet overall. In essence, nobody owns TCP/IP, and nobody delegated authority to the IETF. The Internet’s code layer, the software that runs the servers, links and connections, is in the public domain because it is written in the languages of Open Source Systems. The governance structure that sustains and evolves the Internet is itself self-organizing, just as packet switching self organizes the transmission of bits. Thus, the problem of sustaining the future of the Internet is one of defending the altered notions of governance that characterize distributed and self-organizing systems, and understanding that such systems are antithetical to the forms of governance assumed by nation states.

* “By ‘the Internet,’ we ordinarily mean a network of net-works built upon a set of basic protocols called TCP/IP. Owners of physical equipment choose whether to run the protocols on their technology. Obviously, that choice should be unconstrained. … Technically, this design creates an “innovation commons.” Everyone has the freedom to innovate in this space without seeking the permission of anyone else.”
  + - Lawrence Lessig. Coase’s First Question: When should there not be property rights? Cato Institute. Regulation, Vol.27, No. 3, Fall 2004.
* “As the internet is, like the space, the seas, the air, shared by mankind, we have to debate and decide upon such key issues at the global level and in close cooperation with the internet community of users. The discussion on network neutrality is not a technical question to be answered by regulatory authorities but firstly a political question to be answered by the people: the internet is theirs! While I believe that we should not overplay this question, our objective as policy makers worldwide should be to prevent powerful interests putting at risk the openness of the internet as a public space and weakening innovation on networks.”

Viviane Reding. European Community Commissioner for Information Society and Media. OECD Ministerial Meeting on the Future of the Internet Economy, Seoul, Korea, June 2008.

Actual efforts to reframe notions of governance are being addressed in other forums than Internet governance. We inhabit ecologies, and understanding that ecologies self-organize requires a radical alteration of worldview. Digital culture is emerging from a relational worldview founded on the principles governing interdependence in open and self-organizing systems. In the Internet’s impact on socio-cultural change, remember that we make our networks and our networks make us. Open and collaborative communities of interaction form networked social ecologies. Understanding Internet Governance as an ecology mirrors a shift in our understanding both of governance and of the significance of community within it. Internet governance and governance are converging, in the sense of governance by the Internet, not governance of it. Internet policy is not about technology but about socio-economic development**.** Today all policy is Internet policy. The future of governance in the digital age is what’s at stake.

There is a Community Informatics Declaration that states the global is a federation of locals. The best place to act in applying principles for governance as self-organization is neither national nor global. It’s local. It’s at the level of the interaction of individuals and the communities of interest and practice they inhabit. You cannot get to federating the locals unless you go all the way to saying it’s the individual human being who is sovereign. Otherwise you don’t get from models with centers to models that are distributed. You are claiming a change in epistemology that isn’t really a change. Shifting the process of defining citizenship from the national level to the global level does not reframe the process of external definition. Something other than you still asserts authority to define what you are. Whereas, in distributed systems, you define yourself.