

# Modes of Governance in Digitally Networked Environments

**Interdisciplinary Workshop**  
**Oxford Internet Institute – Oxford University**  
**Thursday, March 26, 2009 – 9am-6pm**

Over the past decades, a variety of new technologies have reconfigured the ways in which we initiate and maintain social and economic relations. Today, millions of people around the globe buy goods from people they have never met in person, edit the online encyclopedia Wikipedia without monetary rewards, use e-mail and SMS to organize political protest, stay in contact with friends via social networking sites, or look for a new partner via online dating services. In short, an increasing part of our lives is taking place in digitally networked environments. Powered by information and communication technologies built on cheap and interconnected processors with considerable computing capacity, these environments are characterized by novel forms of interaction.

Digitally networked environments are often assumed to magically govern themselves. Especially when traditional modes of governance like law and centralized regulations fail, researchers tend to resort to rather vague ideas like “self-regulation,” “decentralization,” “liberalization,” or “peer production” to describe the complex interactions and mechanisms that take place in large-scale, loose-knit socio-technical networks. Moreover, the network itself is often contrasted with markets or hierarchies as a new mode of governance in its own right.

This workshop will adopt a different approach and take a closer look at new and non-obvious modes of governance in digitally networked environments. Specifically, we would like to explore what these modes are, how they work, and who or what controls them. Questions might be, but are not limited to: What is the role of calculation, measurement, classification, trust, accountability, or reputation? How can we understand leadership and authority under these conditions? Which role does the technical infrastructure play? Is there evidence for a new form of network governance? Overall, the goal of the workshop is to generate a deeper conceptual, empirical, and normative understanding of these new modes of governance through open and creative discussion.

Format: We are planning on having a one-day workshop with several sessions, focusing on one mode of governance each. A session will be kicked off by a presenter and a respondent, preferably grounding their arguments in empirical analysis. At the end of the day, we hope to wrap up the workshop and summarize the findings in a brief report.

Participation: The workshop is open to a maximum of 16 postgraduates and post-docs from all departments and universities. If you would like to participate, please send a brief abstract (300 words) including your name, affiliation, and contact details to [malte.ziewitz@oii.ox.ac.uk](mailto:malte.ziewitz@oii.ox.ac.uk) by Feb. 20, 2009. Priority will be given to those who commit to introducing a mode of governance of their choice for discussion. Refreshments, lunch, and challenging ideas will be provided. A limited amount of travel funding is available.

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