Department of Media and Communications public lecture

Imagining the Internet: policy challenges

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Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: #LSEMansell
Imagining the Internet: Policy Challenges

Professor Robin Mansell
Mapping where we are in time and space
Social Imaginaries

How people imagine their social existence.

“.. how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations”. (Charles Taylor 2007)
Pre-Internet World (1930s / 1940s / 1960s)

Entertainment and Information Processing and Control

[Image of a television set and a book cover]
Convergence and Digital Content
Towards a Mash-up Participatory Culture

Choice
Free content
Paid for by us directly
Paid by subscription or membership
Paid for by advertising, or subsidised by other products/events
Data, Hardware & Software for Development
Social Media Applications
Emergency - Russian Wildfires Help Map
But the question is who sets the norms and conventions for how we interact in a world mediated by the Internet?

Whose norms count the most now and in the future?
Online Sharing and Digital Piracy

Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization that develops, supports, and stewards legal and technical infrastructure that maximizes digital creativity, sharing, and innovation.

Share, Remix, Reuse — Legally

BT

TalkTalk

Brighter Phone & Broadband

Digital Economy Act 2010

Online Infringement of Copyright and the Digital Economy Act 2010

Draft Initial Obligations Code

copyright

all rights reserved
‘Friends’ and Stock Market Valuations

Facebook passes 1 billion users in October 2012, share price drops from $42 to $21 in 2012. Google share price opens in 2004 at $85 and goes to $767 today.
Is Techno-economic or Social Policy the Main Driver and Whose Values Count?

Open Government – Open Data

Network Neutrality – Open Internet

Democracy

Vince Cerf
‘Father of the Internet’
“Online communities are real communities”
1974

Tim Berners-Lee
Inventor of the World Wide Web,
1989
Safety, Security and Privacy
So, what future – what hopes and fears?
Will we become ‘alone together’?
Will we become ‘overconnected’?
Imaginaries of the Internet

Dominant
• Digital innovation -> mastery of environment
• Choice is maximised
• Copyright enforcement creates best incentives for production
• Do not regulate the Internet, regulation infringes on human rights

Alternatives
• Digital innovation -> mastery of environment
• Choice is maximised
• Open information sharing creates best incentives for production, loosen copyright restrictions
• Do not regulate the Internet, regulation infringes on human rights
Progress towards realisation of one is imagined as being damaging to realisation of other.
Is There a Need for Policy Intervention?

• Improved accountability at all levels, local and global.
  – Leaving outcomes of innovation in the complex Internet Age to unaccountable groups means **adapting whether the result is benign or otherwise**.

• New combinations of top down and bottom up governance are needed – not necessarily ‘regulation’.
  – Why? The **automation of everyday life** is cumulative
  – What is possible today may become (even more) excessive in the future.

• Policy measures are needed to:
  – Roll back expansionist copyright legislation.
  – Limit intrusive surveillance of citizens online and offline.
What kind of Internet Age are you imagining now?
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