

Preface

Like many watershed moments, the establishment of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in 2006 went unnoticed by most Internet users. But by providing an integrated forum for deliberation on Internet public policy issues, the IGF has the potential to begin to legitimately address some of the Internet's biggest challenges—such as spam, cybercrime, privacy and freedom of expression online that have proved intractable for its current governance regime (an odd patchwork of United States government fiat, decentralised private action and *ad hoc* national and international regulation).

This book explores the potential for the IGF to act as a democratically legitimate and effective body within which for all concerned stakeholders, including those largely excluded from the Internet governance regime until now, to collaborate on the development of public policy concerning the Internet, following a model that draws from the decentralised governance exercised by organisations involved in the development of the Internet's technical standards, but which also recognises the need to interoperate with other sources and subjects of international and transnational (non-state) law.

The principle that the governance of transnational public policy issues is most legitimately exercised through a network of affected stakeholders has much broader application than to the Internet governance regime alone. It is therefore hoped that this book will also be useful to scholars, practitioners and activists in other fields such as environmental governance, sustainable development and trade policy, and that it may stimulate further research on the application of multi-stakeholder governance principles in these issue areas.

The book is based on my PhD thesis in law, which was submitted in March 2008. It has been revised and updated to take account of some of the developments leading up the third IGF meeting in Hyderabad, India, which is to take place in December 2008. The manuscript has also been expanded to include additional material throughout, and several entirely new sections including one in the Introduction on the replication of the Internet's culture.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who have supported me in this endeavour, which I commenced before the Internet Governance Forum even existed. In particular, I must thank the supervisors and examiners of my PhD thesis, though the time scale for production of the manuscript did not allow for the consideration of any comments from my examiners (and in any case the errors and deficiencies of the manuscript are mine alone). I must also thank my parents Ian and Kaye and my wife Dominica for their love and support, without which the production of this book would not have been possible.

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