



LA QUADRATURE DU NET

Internet Governance

For the last 15 years the "Internet Governance" meetings have attracted attention and led us to believe that consensual rules could emerge from a *multi-stakeholder top-down process*. Meanwhile, the latest summits (NETmundial, IGF Istanbul, etc.) show that not much has come out of these 15 years of multi-party meetings, while at the same time many political, economic or technological decisions have been taken with the goal of undermining fundamental rights in the digital space. Many disclosures notably show that technology is too often turned against its users, turned into a tool of surveillance, control, and oppression.

The issues raised by mass surveillance, the protection of digital freedoms, Net neutrality or universal access to a free Internet cannot be settled by fruitless multi-party discussions where the list of participants and the topics are picked in advance by organisers prejudiced in favor of states, telecommunications enterprises and online service providers.

These actors, states, companies or intelligence agencies did not wait on governance meetings to modify the structure and function of the Internet in order to enhance mass surveillance and hamper free and universal access to the web.

This 'global multi-stakeholder governance' conceals the fact that the political spheres are losing control under the influence and to the benefit of big corporations. As for a *bottom-up* approach (where decisions are made at the lowest level), on the contrary, citizens and national parliaments would pressure governments and industrial actors in order to obtain decisions protecting freedoms, in order to try to make such positioning spread across neighboring political spheres. We can only expect our governments to consider and secure the Internet as a common good collectively belonging to all its users. In the same way as water, air or natural resources, or even health, governments must with no delay protect the Internet without compromise, by securing its foundations: neutrality, absence of surveillance, decentralization.

People can then collectively engage in a comprehensive discussion on the nature of the

confidence that can be placed in public and private stakeholders who will manage this common resource. What conditions of transparency and responsibility can we require in a democratic society (such as the use of free software and the ability for the public to check it), from those who are responsible for the protection of our fundamental freedoms, since they control a part of our common infrastructure?

Without strong international safeguards to protect the Internet as a *common good*, and the effective involvement of citizens, every 'governance' action will be perverted to serve the sole interests of states and private corporations.