

Internet censorship takes new forms

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Internet censorship has extended during last decade from a couple of countries to over 60 countries and become adapted as a global norm. Overall, politics, economy and technologies have influenced in this development and strengthened it. As a response to these challenges The Freedom of Speech and Censorship in the Internet Age –project has studied in 2011-2012 the status of censorship, factors behind the development and prospects for its' future.

Freedom of speech and censorship project

The Freedom of Speech and Censorship in the Internet Age -project was launched in January 2011. The research project is funded by the Helsingin Sanomat Foundation – Helsingin Sanomat representing a leading Finnish media company. Chair of FAIFE, Director and Chief Librarian of the National Library of Finland, Kai Ekholm, is the research project manager. The project also cooperates with the School of Information Sciences at University of Tampere in Finland.

The main goal of the project is to study the status of censorship in the internet era and prospects for its' future. To reach this goal, the theme of internet censorship is divided into several subtopics, e.g. internet culture, technologies, marketplace, privacy and anonymity, which will be studied in different articles. The outcomes of the project include a doctoral thesis, research articles, a web site as well as contents and tools for broader discussion on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Blog, Book club).

Internet censorship and freedom of speech will be a major topic of discussion in several events which are targeted to professionals and the general public. The IFLA Conference 2012 in Helsinki will be the main event to bring up these topics. Project deliverables will also be shared

on FAIFE's web pages, FAIFE Spotlight and via FAIFE's social media channels. The project has also gained publicity on the printed media and the radio in Finland.

A short history of internet censorship

The era of the internet has turned out to have different phases in relation to its controllability: it started in the 1990s with "open commons". Its early idealism was expressed in a slogan: "information wants to be free". However, from the beginning of the 2000s the control of the cyberspace has increased through filtering, blocking and government intervention. (Deibert et al, 2012)

Since the mid-2000s control methods have extended and they have become more subtle and nuanced. More targeted and specified controlling mechanisms were introduced: "Just in time" optimizing and registration and licensing requirements were applied to identify users. Governments were no more the main stakeholder of control, but public-private partnerships increased. (Deibert et al, 2012)

In the 2010s the models of control have become more refined and involved in the internet architecture – they have become embedded in principles and protocols of technologies. Overall, the control of the internet is no more limited to tota-

litarian countries it has been adapted as a global norm (Deibert & Rohozinski, 2010).

Technologies of surveillance and censorship intertwined

Censorship on the internet age has extended and become more complex. Technologies may involve contents on different levels: on web-sites, specific web-pages or even on specific words. The desired contents may be filtered out of search results or access on web pages or services may be denied. Stronger punishments include taking down the content on a given site or sanctioning the producers of the contents. (Dutton et.al., 2010)

Censorship and surveillance have become intertwined on the internet. Monitoring of users and communication aims at revealing the defined targets and criminalized contents - and other tools and methods of censorship can be further utilized to take into action. Advanced surveillance technologies may also function as multi-purpose tools. Deep packet inspection can e.g. intercept and log Internet traffic, it may be used for enforcement of copyright, to prioritize limited bandwidth and to track users' behavior – and these tools can serve different parties and interests (Dutton et al., 2010).

Democracy and the internet are not bedfellows

The internet and social media do not necessarily go hand in hand with democracy, although many technology utopists have had this type of ideals. There are many other factors in the background: economic, cultural, religious, political, individual and chances of history. (MacKinnon, 2012a)

In many countries the internet has mainly extended the power of the government or strengthened the impact of totalitarian regimes (MacKinnon, 2012a). Sometimes interests of the government are intertwined with private companies. Companies may want to extend their markets and public sector as a client is too lucrative for them although the government policies would

turn out to become destructive for some groups of the citizens. This kind of intermediary censorship has been in steep rise (Zuckerman, 2010).

Even the relationship between the internet and its revolutionary impact during last years is somewhat vague. For example, The Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt did not take place because of the internet, rather via the internet. Social and structural changes of the society had developed slowly behind the curtain a decade or so ago. Within those years activists experimented different kinds of network technologies, created and refined contents and developed their networks of relationships. Eventually, the Arab Spring was a result of the long-standing developments which actualized both in the physical environment and via the internet when the right moment occurred. (MacKinnon, 2012a)

Big data

Big data has become a concept which describes the conditions of extended data collection. Google, Facebook and Microsoft have data on hundreds of millions of users. Data pools expand rapidly due to the data growth in transactional databases, expansion of multimedia content, popularity of social media and proliferation of applications of sensors in the Internet of Things. (Maniyka et al., 2012).

Big data doesn't refer to the increased amount of data only, but to the technologies which are used to gather, analyze, link, and compare large data sets and to the analysis of the data used to identify patterns in order to make economic, social, technical, and legal claims. (Boyd & Crawford, 2012, s. 2).

The other side of the coin is that the same data has implications on the status of a citizen through decision making, evaluation and for defining user's rights, access, benefits and restrictions. Data practically defines the citizen's position in society.

Colonized cyberspace

During the short history of the internet age, tools of censorship and surveillance have become bound together with the other utilities for network management. Ubiquitous technologies, which enable locating and recognition of users and extend data collection to various everyday activities, intensify the scope and worsen the conditions of data surveillance and censorship.

Censorship is no more limited to publications, books or articles or specific hot issues and totalitarian countries. Control on the internet has become a global, networked and multi-stakeholder effort which enables a third party involvement in data flows and communications. And ubiquitous environment with its hidden data collection and management practices makes it even less transparent (Karhula, 2008).

Cyberspace has also become colonized by powerful actors and by competing geopolitical and commercial interests. The influential actors and

their battles over the power and the control of cyberspace have become evident. And an opposite reaction has emerged, since large activist movements have raised their voices against extended control mechanisms. (Deibert et al, 2010)

Data-driven economy and a new information regime

A global shift towards personal data-driven economy has already taken place. It has proceeded mainly without public discussion on citizens' rights to the data related to their own activities or about possible tools and options to protect themselves against inappropriate data collection. This setting recalls for the definition of rights, freedoms and power in relation to data flows and considerations of fair information practices related to the personal information management.

Joseph Turow defines his perspective on data-driven economies and says: an information regime which respect users would be needed (Turow, 2011). New issues do not only concern individuals and their privacy protection and even civil liberties, but new vulnerabilities for groups of citizens as a target of social sorting - and from a broader perspective it concerns social changes and structures the large scale data surveillance enables and initiates (Lyon, 2003, Lyon, 2006). 📖

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Project on social media:

Book club: sensuuria.kirjastot.fi

Facebook: [Sensuuria](https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Sensuuria/357183644320504) <https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Sensuuria/357183644320504>

Twitter: [Sensuuria!](https://twitter.com/#!/Sensuuria)

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