At the core of governance debates is the conceptualization of power, diffused and commanded in novel ways with the advent of new technology and new actors. In one of the shortest definitions ever given, governance is ‘order plus intentionality’ (Rosenau 1992, 5), representing a political act with forms of inclusion and exclusion and, inherently, an expression of power. Its use with reference to the Internet carries the same meaning, exposing an intricate network of hierarchical and social relations, only comparable to the complex technical architecture on which it relies. Despite the plethora of writings on globalization and technological change, a more refined look at governance is required in order to understand nascent global domains, in particular their genesis and structuration.

Part of broader governance transformations, Internet policy-making remains polycentric and in flux. Metaphorically, Ziewitz and Pentzold refer to Internet governance (IG) as a ‘difficult horse to catch’ (2014, 306). Studying its institutions, rule systems, and steering mechanisms remains particularly challenging due to an ever-increasing number of processes spanning global and regional levels. The tendency to study modes of governance in isolation partially explains the limited engagement with this in international affairs. Its direct effect on the foundational international relations (IR) scholarship is the false assumption that problem-solving drives institutional interactions in an undifferentiated manner. I propose below an analytical framework that challenges the idea of the Internet as a homogenous object of governance by distinguishing among three key dimensions for observing variation: mechanisms, actors, and practices of governance.

The deconstruction exercise undertaken here serves two purposes: first, it positions central elements required to understand the emergence and articulation of IG and delineates its evolution phases. Second, it underscores how the governance concept is a broad, yet powerful analytical framework for exploring the multifaceted ways in which regulatory arrangements come into
being, in addition to decision-making processes and coordination procedures. The deconstructive analysis used here strips the concept of its ideological connotations in a first phase and adds the context, power dynamics, and actors in a second phase. After exploring the global governance literature in search of tenets that provide useful insights for the present analysis, this chapter elaborates on the framework of analysis in use and the research design guiding this study.

Global Governance Repertoires and the Internet

The asymmetric concentration of technology in the West, the birth of the Internet in the American context, and the evolving space for regulatory input were at first considered in isolation, rather than as part of broader transformations in governance. Until recently, limited attention was paid in IR to the way in which global priorities permeate daily operations, regulatory standards, and action plans. This was partly due to a split in the way governance was conceptualized. Reflecting on this polarization, Graz (2014) distinguished between functional and structural theories of governance. At the core of functional theories is the drive to ‘get things done’ and find solutions to concrete problems. Focusing on the exercise of power through practices, functional governance theorists generally investigate coordination and competition, decision-making processes, and institutional design. They tend to converge around forms of steering and regulation\(^1\) similar to or distinct from governmental operations.

In line with the critical tradition in International Political Economy (Shields et al. 2011; Cohen 2014), structural theories of global governance address complex interconnections, sites of authority, and power relations among actors, analysing underlying ideologies, as well as market and state system transformations; they make normative claims about the reconfiguration of objects and subjects of authority and question governing epistemologies and inclusion/exclusion mechanisms. Accountability, democratic practices, and inclusiveness at the global level are also explored. Interrogations on the role of technology in supporting, advancing, and reinforcing ideologies, while dominant in science and technology studies, remain rather limited in IG (exceptions include Mueller 2004; deNardis 2009; Chenou 2014; Carr 2016).

\(^1\) Baldwin et al. (1998) assert that there are three distinct concepts of regulation: (a) authoritative rules; (b) efforts of state agencies to steer the economy; and (c) mechanisms of social control (widest sense). Throughout this book, regulation is predominantly understood as authoritative rules.
The diversity of approaches that attempt to explain contemporary governance processes cannot be disconnected from the modalities employed. Early influential work on global governance focused—almost exclusively—on formal mechanisms; subsequent writings provided a more nuanced approach by integrating informality and everyday practices. Twenty-five years after the seminal work of Rosenau and Czempiel (1992) on ‘governance without government’, a number of limitations and blind spots constrain the theoretical expansion of this promising agenda. In pointing out how governance is different from government, the majority of studies have been modelled on the state/non-state actor dichotomy (Stoker 1998) and processes that are most visible in a number of issue areas, emphasizing similarities and differences with governmental ordering (Graz 2014, 5).

A granular approach to ‘changing modes of governance’ emerging in the 2000s (Pierre 2000; Kooiman 2003; Pierre and Peters 2005) revived the debates by introducing a dynamic perspective. It inspired a diversity of approaches: transnational new governance (Abbott and Snidal 2009), ‘public–private partnerships’ (Boerzel and Risse 2005, 2010; Andonova 2010, 2014), ‘multistakeholder initiatives’ (Jerbi 2012; Raymond and deNardis 2015; Radu et al. 2015), or transnational policy networks (Biersteker 2014). This added to the complexity of understanding formal mechanisms, and provided a basis for cumulative knowledge on the inner workings of global governance. Importantly, these endeavours also noted the degree of informality within and outside formal decision-making and shifted attention to what is not directly observable and remains largely non-codified in global policymaking. Relying on non-binding forms of cooperation and selected membership (no mandate or formal entitlement), informal governance dominates IG processes, but remains largely understudied.

The mechanisms through which informal governance emerges originate either with networks or with processes. In the first category, elites design and impose or interact strategically to reach the expected outcomes; in the second, decentralized processes with a plethora of actors require coordination mechanisms, one-stop-shops as focal points, bargaining or repeated interactions bargaining (Knight 1992). Guy Peters (2007) proposes to divide informal governance into soft law, networks, partnerships, co-production, multilevel governance, and open method of coordination. Broadly understood, informal governance refers to the ‘operation of networks of individual and collective, private and public actors pursuing common goals’ (Christiansen et al. 2003, 7). Some of these elements are also employed in the norm-building literature, where human agency, indeterminacy, chance occurrences, and favourable events are generally explored to explain emergence, primarily through process tracing or genealogy.
Deconstructing Internet Governance

Building on the work of Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), the norms creation dimension is emphasized in global governance discussions of ‘norm entrepreneurs’ and ‘organizational platforms’. This is consonant with the ‘networked governance’ approach applied to Internet security by Mueller et al. (2013) for the identification of interdependent actors that opt for collaboration or for unilateral action in the absence of overarching authority. Defining, enforcing, and reproducing norms stands at the basis of governance articulation, which can take numerous forms and shapes. Various governance mechanisms co-exist simultaneously, making the process of designing norms highly complex and oftentimes hybrid, with multiple sources of authority involved. Opening up IG to the conditions of its formation permits an in-depth tracing of the individuals behind influential proposals that later on consolidate into powerful institutional forms.

A useful analytical tool to distil the multidimensional governance concept is the distinction between what is observable through concrete outcomes and what remains invisible to the public eye. Understanding that technology, just like the regulatory infrastructure on which it is built, is not neutral, allows for a methodically sound investigation of formality and informality. The first comprises the mechanisms set in place by decision-makers, be they hard or soft law instruments. The latter captures the role of actors beyond what can be quantified and power dynamics that are reproduced in everyday practices, sometimes without a conscientious acknowledgement of the effects.

This vantage point bridges a number of disciplinary approaches and permits the exploration of key dimensions from the (meta)theoretical repertoires of global governance that best explain how the Internet evolved into a field of global power. These elements inform the analytical framework presented subsequently. For each research stream, I also explore, where available, related, oftentimes implicit hypotheses on the emergence and articulation of governance and assess their relation to IG developments and writings.

Varieties of Governance

Formal outcomes of international negotiation processes, in particular treaties and conventions signed and ratified by states, have been meticulously studied post-Second World War. The focus on transnational cooperation and implementation of international law surfaced early on, exhibiting a plethora of governance means applied outside the domestic sphere. Born out of a military project of the US government at the end of the 1960s, ARPANET, the precursor of the Internet offered little of interest to scholars of global governance, but set in motion the greatest revolution in telecommunications
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and subsequently in socio-economic affairs. To be understood as a new and influential policy field, the Internet needed to reach a global scale. It now accounts for structural changes in power distribution, power perception, and behaviour shaping, but does not fit swiftly into a single theoretical stream. The many instances of private initiative and cooperation across stakeholder groups stand at odds with the statist perspective, while governance arrangements mixing the formal and the informal escape a streamlined theorization.

The international regime theory, developed in the 1980s, provided new impetus for the analysis of global institutional arrangements. Its contribution to disentangling modalities of governance is significant here for two reasons: first, it pinpointed the complex process around establishing rules, norms, and principles to be adopted by a wide range of actors; second, it provided the terminology for issue-areas, which constitutes a starting point for this study. Krasner defined international regimes as ‘sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations’ (1983, 19). According to him, ‘principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice’ (Krasner 1983, 2). Formally, the members of international regimes were sovereign nations (generally treated as monolith entities), yet implementation of actions governed by international regimes could and often was conducted by private entities (Young 1982) and usually constrained elites within states (Puchala and Hopkins 1982).

Regimes assigned power to collective units, which develop, agree, enforce rules and establish institutions. In early approaches, agency was eluded as emphasis was placed on regime principles, rather than on the role of specific organizations or individuals. Critiques pointed out the degree of ‘imprecision and woolliness’ (Strange 1983) surrounding the regime theory and the implicit risk of tautology: ‘theories about regimes have run into trouble when the same theory explained the origin, as well as the maintenance or the demise of a regime’ (Smith 1987).

Newer strands of research, expanded to ‘regime complexes’, address upfront the role of active leadership (structural, intellectual, charismatic) in promoting cooperation (Keohane and Victor 2010). For Raustiala and Victor (2004), a regime complex represents an ‘array of partially overlapping and non-hierarchical institutions governing a particular issue area’. Orsini et al. refine this to understand a regime complex as ‘a network of three or more international regimes that relate to a common subject matter; exhibit overlapping membership; and generate substantive, normative or operative interactions
recognized as potentially problematic whether or not they are managed effectively’ (2013, 29). Mueller, Mathiason, and Klein (2007) and Nye (2011) subsequently applied this understanding to the governance of the Internet.

Mixing norms, institutions, and procedures of both formal and informal nature, Nye (2014) takes this further and reflects on ‘the regime complex for managing global cyber activities’. However, his analysis and similar attempts to apply the regime complex framework to IG remain oblivious of organizational infrastructure and stop short of defining the relevant ‘nodes’ in the networks constituting regime complexes (Levinson and Marzouki 2015). The other major limitation is the difficulty in explaining how regime shifts occur. Helfer suggests that regime shifting works by ‘broadening the policy spaces within which decisions are made and rules are adopted’ (2009, 39), but it remains unclear how this applies across various IG subfields.

Despite its shortcomings, the regime theory literature needs to be credited for its contribution to the development of the ‘issue area’ concept as a deliberate cluster of concerns. In early theorization, regimes were originally established to regulate single issues (fishing, money, radio frequencies, etc.) rather than issue domains. As seen earlier in the discussion on regime complexes, the boundaries of an issue domain are rarely clearly delimited, and different groups may disagree on what could be included under a certain label, meaning that the process of contestation is continuous. Changes in an issue domain are rarely tackled convincingly by regime theorists. As any other evolving process, issue development is affected by internal and external factors that cannot be properly captured in a static theory. A dialectic approach is thus more adequate. The tenets discussed above remain incomplete without a clear picture of how they come into play in the constitution of a global field of power. This book sheds light on how such dynamics get established and articulated over time in ruling the Internet.

The complexity of existing orderings gets more difficult to distil as their mixed nature allows for strengthening the public or the private character of organizations in ways that best suit the case at hand. The same entity might be treated as public for some purposes and as private for some other. Moreover, informal governance arrangements, a well-established form of cooperation at the international level, are often obscured in the theorization of governance regimes. For Abbott and Snidal (2000), they represent transitory arrangements on the path to legalization, whereas for Biersteker (2014) and Pauwelyn et al. (2013) they are a permanent feature of contemporary governance. Non-binding forms of governance (‘soft law’) and sector-specific policy communities foster information exchange, clarify legal and technical matters, have the potential to table solutions and narrow down policy options, as well as extend the reach of agreements that can be rubber-stamped
in formal processes. Conversely, they render processes of policy inclusion narrower through selective participation and constraints through pre-decisions, while increasing the potential for rule fluctuation, non-codification abuse, and deficient accountability.

A global policy space is made up of relations that can be observed and those that are hidden to the public eye. In the Bourdieusian tradition, the processes of inclusion and exclusion are intrinsic to the structuration of the field\(^2\) and, thus, to its hierarchical disposition. The IG field is seen here as a setting in which agents situate themselves via social positions. Shaped by the interactions taking place, the field is structured according to rules that are specified in the process of constructing the domain, but also based on the agent’s habitus and capital, be it social, economic, or political. For Bourdieu, power and class relations structure internally the system of social positions, thus turning the field into an arena of struggle for the appropriation of different forms of capital.

He makes an important distinction between the vertical and the horizontal organization of a field. While the first is a hierarchical dimension of structuration, the latter is a transversal one, applying across different subfields with equal purchase. Both are forms of power that can be observed in the constitution of new issue domains, in particular as they undergo differentiation to become independent or autonomous spaces of rule-making. To situate these dynamics, a broader perspective on the IG shifts is needed, revealing the extent to which this new domain is influenced by global ordering trends, regulatory or deregulatory.

As a sociopolitical, hybrid space, the Internet we know today comprises different modes of governance instituted at the global level, including technical decisions, private business policies, and international regulatory arrangements, as well as formal and informal mechanisms and practices that become authoritative in the everyday operation of the network. Having clarified the varieties of governance presented in the literature, authority sources and practices are discussed next as concrete ways to develop and implement norms and principles for regulating a new issue domain.

State and Private Authority

Conceptualized either as a unitary actor or as an elaborate network, the state re-surfaces at junction points in IG discussions. Contrary to dynamics in other international domains, state control is highly contested in the Internet.

\(^2\) Bourdieu’s field concept is used in this analysis interchangeably with ‘domain’ to refer to the relations established for creating a global system of rules for the governance of the Internet.
arena, where new governance arrangements emerged in quasi-private setups like the Internet technical standards and protocols or the allocation of domain names. Operations critical to the functioning of the Internet remain exclusively in private hands, including submarine cable production and deployment, Internet access provision, and the majority of services and products available on the web. Alongside the public Internet, many private Internet spaces developed, such as Intranets, estimated to be ten times larger than the public network (Brown and Marsden 2013).

The ‘hollowing out of the state’ (Rhodes 1994) predicted a complex process through which state functions were privatized, devolved, eroded, or transferred at supra-national (EU) or international levels. In such situations, governments engaged in cross-sector partnerships, entering constellations of actors and decision-making processes in which they were not endowed with final authority, though they could (re)turn to the position of regulators (Majone 1996; Higgott et al. 2000; Moran 2002). The ‘retreat of the state’ (Strange 1996) suggested the enabling cooperative mechanisms of meta-coordination, namely rules, frameworks, and regulation of externalities. Closely related was the thesis of ‘state orchestration’, with governments acting as incentivizers, initiators, or implementers (Abbott et al. 2015; Jerbi 2015).

Internet governance studies have long been explicitly concerned with the role of the state and its multiple transformations in a hybrid environment. Celebrating the multiplicity of regulatory frameworks and mechanisms in place, their novelty and the characteristics of the actors involved in these processes oftentimes eluded the substance of governance debates and power positionings. Institutional design—and later on the focus on broadly defined stakeholder participation in decision-making—shifted attention towards the state as a catalyst, funder, or partner (van Eeten et al. 2014). Novel, yet fragmented governance arrangements are generally preferred as a focus of research: voluntary schemes such as the Global Network Initiative (Jerbi 2015), institutional innovations like the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) or the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) (Mueller 2004; Antonova 2007; Malcolm 2008), transnational state networks on cybersecurity or child online protection (Livingston 2013), multistakeholder initiatives and public–private partnerships (Schmidt 2014), or crowdsourcing initiatives (Radu et al. 2015).

Territoriality, a key concept for state-centric approaches, saw a gradual shift in meaning, from exercising control over hard borders to controlling networks and soft borders (Biersteker 2014). Unlike what early cyber-libertarians proclaimed, the Internet was not ‘unbound with respect to geography’ (Goldsmith and Wu 2006, 58) and sovereign principles dominated technical specifications, in particular through the laying of cables and
the use of location-sensitive software. Examples abound: complete Internet shutdowns occurred in 2011 at the request of governments amidst mass protests in Egypt, Libya, and Syria; ‘cyber-sovereign’ China created its own version of the network; and the United States only ended its oversight over the ICANN in September 2016.

At the other end of the spectrum, private rule-making processes were studied, among others, by Risse (2006), Boerzel and Risse (2005), Pattberg (2005), Kirton and Trebilcock (2004), who laid the foundations for a pluralistic understanding of spheres of authority, with insights from sociology, history, political science, and economics. Forms of private governance discussed in the literature range from corporate social responsibility (Vogel 2005), voluntary instruments (Ruggie 2004), and industry self-regulation (Webb 2002) to user-generated or Web 2.0 content regulation (O’Reilly 2005). Non-state actors actively involved in world politics may be motivated by ‘universal values or factional greed, by profit and efficiency considerations, or the search for salvation’ (Ruggie 2004, 509).

As a key problematique in contemporary governance studies, the proliferation of private actors and the diversification of their means of action is also relevant for this study. Private initiative is a dominant causal explanation for how governance comes into being, as well as for the structuring of particular configurations of governance (Cutler et al. 1999; Hall and Biersteker 2002; Bjola and Kornprobst 2010), generally perceived as more flexible and innovation-fostering. Originally, Cutler et al. (1999), Haufler (2001), and Hall and Biersteker (2002) investigated how governance functions formerly performed by states became privatized and outsourced to private actors. Hall and Biersteker identified three types of private authority—market-based, moral, and illicit—through which ‘non-state actors cooperate across borders to establish rules and standards of behaviour accepted as legitimate by agents not involved in their definition’ (Nolke and Graz 2008, 2).

Hall and Biersteker also draw attention to the ‘the reversibility of private authority’ (2002, 213), discussing how the state might supersede the private arrangements and how authority might be undermined in a salient political situation. Their book does not offer a single answer to the question of when reversibility occurs, noting that allowing or limiting private authority depends on the case at hand. What the contributors to the volume agree on is that a reversal of authority has long-term consequences and becomes costlier over time. Internet policymaking, notably in the last decade, offers many instances of authority being transferred back to governments, with closer supervision imposed, in particular on matters of cybersecurity and data protection.

Today, global governance scholars agree that authority is diffused, decision-making is in part privatized, and the nature of global challenges requires a
multiplicity of structures and means of implementation. Among these, semi-private, quasi-public initiatives such as the Global Environmental Facility, Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, Global Water partnership, or the Anti-Spam Alliance bring together businesses, governments, civil society groups, and international organizations (IOs) from the outset. Standardization bodies performing global roles of accreditation and coordination are sometimes privately owned. Law-like arrangements with private institutions are not uncommon, in particular in dispute resolution in IG. The legitimacy of these configurations rests with the work of communities, who reiterate their practices and routines to bring about contestation or acceptance and buy-in.

Praxis

Understanding how processes and actions are shaped on a daily basis required a change of perspective and that came about with the praxeological turn. The concrete observation of discourses and routines had a long tradition in sociology and anthropology (Geertz 1973; Cetina 1981; Adler 2013; Autesserre 2014), but only recently captured the attention of IG scholars (Flyverbom 2011; Epstein 2013). Global governance-focused contributions in this tradition emphasized shared practices as part of daily habits, dissecting the tacit understandings and knowledge that make such interactions meaningful (Neumann and Sending 2010; Eagleton-Pierce 2013; Best and Gheciu 2014; Bueger 2016; Pouliot 2016).

In world politics, routines explain actions that seem spontaneous and guide us through the translation of what is invisible, but authoritative (Bourdieu 1976). They demarcate the inclusion/exclusion lines and embedded power mechanisms, providing insight into organizational logics. Oftentimes, they become visible through the dichotomies and oppositions used: sane versus mad (Foucault 1965), dominant versus dominated. In line with Bourdieu’s work, a practice approach pushes for identifying the modus operandi of ‘the field’ before defining the actors. A field is structured according to a system of binary oppositions (orthodox/heterodox, sacred/profane) and is socially constructed, with broadly defined limits ‘situated at the point where effects of the field cease’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 100).

Practice theory insists on the mutual constitution of social structure and action. It shifts the realm of investigation from the ideational level to the physical and the habitual (Swidler 2001). But how do they come into place, if not formulated directly as such? Bourdieu (1976) provides a partial answer to this: in his view, people replicate the constitutive rules not with the intention
of doing so explicitly, but by acting strategically in a space dominated by those rules. The role of individuals and their personal motivations are thus key to the exploration of nascent issue domains. Without this dimension, our understanding of governance emergence and articulation is incomplete.

Through praxis, regulation itself is collectively mediated and legitimized by the key communities whose buy-in is necessary. Functioning as socially negotiated realities, anchoring practices are foundational for the constitution of a global domain of action when their enactment is public and when specific communities identify with their embodiment. As rules change, dominant practices can be perpetuated, replaced, or supplemented by others. For the latter, a similar process of initiation is set in place, so that the addressees of such practices can see that ‘everyone else has seen that things have changed’ (Swidler 2001, 87). In explaining continuity in governance mechanisms, the perpetuation of routines is essential.

The research clusters discussed earlier—varieties of governance, state and private authority, and praxis—form a strong theoretical basis for examining Internet policymaking, combining analyses of power with hypotheses for governance emergence and articulation. The insights they provide offer clues for critically reviewing the evolution of the field from the early day until today. To do that in a structured manner, a complex, original framework of analysis is proposed below, followed by a methodological discussion.

**Deconstructive Lens**

This research situates the evolution of IG amidst global governance processes. In doing so, it decentres IR scholarship as all-encompassing and breaks down the construction of governance mechanisms and power dynamics at the global level. The deconstructive lens applied here opens up global processes to the conditions of their construction, disentangling inherent ambiguities and social positioning over time. It also unpacks processes of meaning-making within communities via dominant practices, taking into account the distribution of power and related discontinuities, as well as contradictions and equivalents in the inner workings of the field.

Initially investigating the relationship between text and meaning, deconstructive approaches tackle the simultaneous process of undoing and affirming. Dismantling conceptual oppositions and systems of thought is at its core. Deconstruction comes to IR from linguistics, but has subsequently been applied across a wide number of disciplines, from anthropology to legal studies. In this expansion, deconstruction acquired a much broader meaning;
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its use was also refined to reflect the many ways in which conceptual boundaries are drawn when applied to new contexts. At its core, this approach challenges assumptions of universality, ahistoricity, and stability.

Thinking about IG in deconstructive terms helps us to identify and trace tensions at the macro level, while acknowledging the fundamental ways in which our understanding is dependent on the visible side of governance, captured in formalized processes. Moving beyond that, this is an exercise in analysing how the social space for political struggles is structured, how outcome documents are produced and by whom. Such a reading of events and meanings is necessarily a work in progress, in particular as the constitution of the IG field is ongoing.

Evolution of Concerns over Time

In spite of the regular reference to the ‘Internet’ as a single unit in everyday speech, this complex network is made up of a number of subfields of governance, ranging from highly technical specifications to socio-economic elements. The fast evolution towards understanding the Internet as a policy field meant that issues related to infrastructure and standards soon came to be regarded as matters of public interest, independent of the sphere of authority under which they were placed. While there is still a functional separation in the work of relevant institutions, it has become difficult to provide a discrete analysis of the Internet without a close investigation of its composite structure.

As a first step in the deconstructive approach taken here, the singling out of subfields of governance allows for a topical separation of the issues under discussion in IG. Growing from a small network to a global political arena took a number of developments that were mirrored in the policy debates of the time, be it for protocols, digital divide, or connectivity in developing countries. The multiple uses of technology also forced a diversification of approaches and, recently, a cross-sectoral understanding of the issues, given that a strict segmentation was no longer possible in a digitized space.

Chartering the field represents a first stage in the situated analysis of actors, issues, institutional mandates, or key developments. Mapping exercises have been particularly prevalent in IG. On the academic level, the most comprehensive mapping exercise was done by Jovan Kurbalija (2005) in his book, *Introduction to Internet Governance*, currently in its seventh edition. His classification of Internet-related issues, divided originally into five baskets (infrastructure and standardization, security, legal, economic, and socio-cultural), evolved over time to include two additional ones: human rights
and development. This has been closely mirrored in the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Mapping exercise in late 2014, which provided an opportunity for stakeholders to comment and review.

Here, I take a historical perspective of the evolution of concerns over time and, with inspiration from the study mentioned earlier, I provide a classification along six dimensions. In a nutshell, the topics covered in Internet-related global discussions advanced from the preoccupation for interconnecting computers to ensuring the security of information flows. Once the Internet expanded globally, legal issues came under the spotlight, starting with a focus on protecting intellectual property rights and, later, on clarifying jurisdictional issues. The e-commerce boom at the end of the 1990s launched what came to be referred to as the ‘digital economy’, in which the largest proportion of the market had an online component. In the mid-2000s, global attention shifted to development issues in connection with access to the Internet, which led to the formulation of an ‘ICT for development’ (ICT4D) agenda. Civil liberties also gained stronger ground during the last decade, including a push for considering Internet access a fundamental right and for affording the same protection online as offline for human rights. An overview of the various clusters of concern for IG is provided below.

Infrastructure and Critical Internet Resources

Technical resources were originally in focus as the TCP/IP protocol, the domain name system, and the root zone came under discussion by an international group, beyond the original team at ARPANET. Instant connectivity is what makes the Internet so valuable, and that relies on the submarine cable infrastructure, the technical standards and protocols ensuring interoperability, and the content and applications layer that users come into contact with daily. Historically, a large part of the critical Internet resources was placed on the American territory and control was retained by the US government over a number of key network functions, generating important controversies leading to the structuration of the field.

The prerogative of the technical community working for ARPA was the development of open standards and protocols for improving the network, but as soon as this became a dominant activity for the flourishing of the private sector, a few technical limitations were imposed. Recently, this prolific area of policymaking has seen debates in three new areas: (1) network neutrality—the principle that all data should be treated in a non-discriminatory way on the Internet pipes without a differentiated price tag per service; (2) cloud computing—the server farms enabling users to access and synchronize data
and programs over the internet beyond their local computing and storage; and (3) Internet of Things—the omnipresent connectivity of devices and appliances able to exchange with one another, whether in the form of smart watches or smart cities. Last, but not least, regulators have shown a renewed interest in infrastructure and critical resources and started observing code for their regulatory practices. A so-called ‘turn to infrastructure’ in public policymaking has been recently documented by IG scholars (deNardis 2009; Brown and Marsden 2013; Musiani et al. 2015).

**Cybersecurity**

Computer security concerns attracted public attention in the early 1980s, when the first cyber viruses were developed (Nye 2011, 3); by the mid-1990s, ‘recreational hackers’ made the phenomenon more widespread (Sommer and Brown 2011). Yet, cybersecurity discussions have only been placed on global agendas in the post-Cold War context (Hansen and Nissenbaum 2009), gaining prominence in the late 1990s. The availability, integrity, authentication, or confidentiality of information systems was subsequently tested via malware, cyberattacks, probes, and even physical shutdowns, moving the public debates from spam to mass-surveillance.

The debate over ensuring protection online has also underlined that the current infrastructure of the Internet does not contain embedded security guarantees since, due to its original design, it was built as a network to facilitate access and information sharing (Markoff 2012). The rules and behaviour cues embedded in the written computer code did not prevent the misuse of such information for illicit or extortive purposes. The dangers posed by the virtual environment remain a major source of contention in international affairs; journalists and researchers highlight either the menace of a ‘digital Pearl Harbor’ (Bendrath 2003) or the ‘unsubstantiated nature of cyber threats’ (Dunn Cavelty and Rolofs 2010). A number of related subfields have thus come into being, such as critical infrastructure protection, cybercrime and cyberespionage, and child online protection.

**Legal Issues**

Legal issues came to be discussed on the international regulatory agenda when the practice of cybersquatting domain name registrations became pervasive at the end of the 1990s (Litman 2000). Primarily oriented towards the protection of intellectual property rights in the early days, the legal concerns expanded to regulatory mechanisms for Internet transactions, jurisdictional disputes, and arbitration. As a prosperous market was developing, the importance afforded to legal aspects grew. Alongside copyright and trademark
issues, the focus included the liability of private intermediaries and the delegation of legal responsibilities to non-state actors.

The role of the courts surfaced in recent years as a counterbalancing act to the myriad of private developments supported by an ever-more powerful underlying infrastructure. New technologies built on top of the Internet, ranging from the Internet of Things to artificial intelligence (AI), have challenged traditional understanding of laws in the offline environment and continue to raise concern about the ability of the current global system to respond effectively to novel challenges.

**Digital Economy**

From the mid-1990s’ e-commerce boom to the full-fledged development of the digital economy, a consolidation of public trust in online services was essential, in part ensured technically through the use of encryption and e-signatures for securing transactions, but also through a number of consumer protection measures and competition policies. Beyond the move of commercial products and services online, the Internet also facilitated the creation of new markets such as those for domain names, software development, or cyber insurance, for which specific regulation is discussed, for example in taxation. The most significant change in the new economy has been in digital advertising and the biggest Internet companies are currently leading in terms of market capitalization.

Technical innovation also gave way to decentralized economic models that bypass the authority of a credible intermediary or a central bank, be it in the operation of the famous cryptocurrency Bitcoin or in the automated execution of digital contracts. ‘Sharing economy’ business models thriving on ease of access and network effects now compete with traditionally regulated services such as the taxi, hospitality, or delivery services. These novel business models enabled by digital platforms feature a great dependence on user data as the most valuable asset, with their strengths residing in the real-time analysis of tremendous amount of (mainly cross-border) data. The new economics is as much about digital information as it is about building monopolies on top of it.

**Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICT4D)**

Ever since the early debates on connectivity, the role of ICTs in international development continued to be mainstreamed. The ideal of an inclusive information society was met in practice with highly uneven patterns of access to technologies, only diminished via the massive adoption of mobile Internet across developing countries. From the early days of telecentres to the
empowerment of communities of innovators outside of the developed world, the digital revolution was closely linked to developments in e-government, education, agriculture, or health, also highlighted in the Millennium Development Goals.

When the ICT agenda came to be discussed in tandem with the situation of developing countries at the World Summit on the Information Society (2003–05), the digital divide was singled out as the main concern. Access to the Internet was still unevenly distributed across countries and its content did not reflect the world’s cultural diversity. Promotion and training for developing e-skills, as well as multilingual, localized content became a priority. The global network enabled online education, but did not fully reach the vulnerable communities. The mixed impact of capacity building and technical assistance programmes, as well as the plethora of unsuccessful private sector-led connectivity experiments led to renewed calls for prioritizing marginalized groups and areas in the 2030 Sustainable Development agenda.

Civil Liberties

Civil liberties, among the thorniest issues of the last decade in Internet-related discussions, became more difficult to disentangle from other issues as it became mainstreamed in Internet-related activities. It incorporates topics such as privacy and data protection, freedom of expression, and identity politics. A ‘rights’ framing has been adopted across the board for addressing substantive issues (deNardis 2010), also supported by the unanimous recognition, in the UN General Assembly, that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online.

The decentralized structure of the Internet allows for mobilization in favour of democratic ideals and civil liberties at various levels. The possibility to document, communicate in real-time, and share information about human rights entitlements and abuses has altered the way in which we conceive of the digital environment. On various occasions, though, surveillance, deliberate distortions and disruptions, malicious interference, and the undermining of liberties-driven processes were enabled by the network. New safeguards and digital rights are currently under discussion, as civil liberties continue to lead the civil society global agenda.

Chronicling the evolution of Internet-related subtopics raises an important question: how do these subfields come together to form an autonomous field of IG? For a long time perceived as an ungoverned space, the Internet is increasingly regulated by a multitude of actors, though high-impact decisions at different levels. The strong push to agree on specific principles, norms, and regulations for e-commerce or cybersecurity is indicative of broader power
struggles that influence the social positioning in the field and beyond. While different trajectories are possible for the evolution of a field, rule-creation practices and their subsequent redefinition or readjustment are at the core of governance articulation and constitute the focus of this book, based on the framework proposed below.

An Analytical Framework for Internet Governance

Operating at the level of setting the rules of the game, global governance systematically combines various dimensions of state and non-state regulation and different modalities to achieve that. Various mechanisms—formal or informal—are deployed to create a new ordering that shapes and defines expectations for the actors in the field, be it by controlling, directing, or regulating influence (Biersteker 2010). Drawing on three key themes ensuing from the review of IR and IG repertoires, I conclude that insufficient attention has been paid to how governance comes into being across different issue domains. In the absence of a systematic investigation of the genesis, the scattered explanations put forward support one of the four main assumptions: functional needs, powerful state thesis, private initiative, or informal mechanisms. Taking origins for granted has direct consequences on the way in which the articulation of governance is understood. This second critique is also pertinent here: the minimal attention paid to comprehensive, long-term, empirically grounded studies of issue domains only gives us a patchy, often-times static view of the enactment of governance.

In the creation of a global field of action, the patterns of governance and shifts in priorities are illustrative of the extent to which global rule-making generates debates, requires joint effort, or relies on targeted action (e.g. specific regulatory responses). Where political decisions are required, the choice between equally viable alternatives will determine the main actors to position themselves in relation to the governance space and the object of ruling. Unlike the rather narrow technical or business decisions, which may or may not be the result of negotiation across a set of institutions, the global rules decided in collective arenas become constitutive of the domain and (re)define the field-specific interplay.

The characteristics of an issue area will define the type of rules set in place at different points in time. As the discussion above shows, the multiple topic areas covered in IG discussions require differentiated approaches, resulting from the pursuit of different objectives, strategies, and instruments of governance. For the Internet, technical specificities determine the extent to which
To move packets of data from one computer to another, standards and protocols are essential. Developing in parallel or intersecting and evolving over time, various mechanisms of governance applicable to the Internet take the technical delimitations as their starting point. Two other dimensions are integrated throughout: actors and anchoring practices of governance.

Mechanisms of Governance

Despite its wide appeal, the concept of ‘mechanism of governance’ poses formidable difficulties to the researcher. To pin it down, I use the soft–hard law continuum, recognizing that not all rules carry the same obligations or have the same effect. The diversity of mechanisms pursued to steer processes essentially describe attachments to one of the dominant features of global ordering, which may involve formal and informal institutions or networks, already in place or newly formed. Importantly, different mechanisms of governance have funding attached to them, ranging from minimal to substantive. The study of mechanisms of governance presented here is based on an *ex-post* analysis of 311 authoritative governance instruments set in place between 1969 and 2015, complemented by an analysis of current trends in Chapter 6.

To understand which mechanisms are at work for particular subfields, I take governance instruments as my entry point, relying on formalized outcomes only. This gives me a uniform proxy for the approaches undertaken to creating rules for governing the Internet, be they legally enshrined or not. I subsequently cluster and categorize them to reveal the mechanisms they illustrate. The database thus constructed allows for exploring the governance patterns, shifts, and variation over time. One of the salient differences between the global structuring and the mechanisms of governance specific to the Internet is that the former defines, constrains, and shapes the environment of the latter. In this study, the global context is not taken for granted; it is problematized to reveal the external shocks and critical junctures that influence the field.

A second important difference is that mechanisms operate differently with respect to intentionality. Technical rules serve a functional purpose: ensuring that the network is functional and that it remains stable over time. Related decisions might comprise international standards, protocols, agreements, and contracts for delegating particular functions to various entities. Private corporate policies and practices, on the other hand, embed a profit-driven logic and are generally based on a contractual relationship. Peer-to-peer agreements, exchange contracts, the management of big data, content
development, business plans and strategies, corporate policies, and end-user contracts, firmly regulate interactions among various actors and have long-term effects. However, unlike standards, most of these remained concealed by confidentiality provisions and are generally not available in the public domain.

The contentious, reputational, and benefactor actions that companies and technical bodies tackle in the public domain are the upshot of a core interest in participating in defining the 'rules of the game'. The result of shorter or longer negotiation processes, such steering mechanisms are fundamental for the constitution of an issue domain. On a continuum from hard (treaties and conventions) to soft (declarations, non-binding resolutions, codes of conduct) law, the resulting mechanisms generally pertain to public policy, community formation, and field constitution.

Rather than providing *ex ante* a theoretical segmentation of potential IG patterns, I give preference in this study to an inductive approach based on the relations revealed by the dataset, further discussed in the research design section. Suffice it to say at this point that this strategy, stressing the functional side of constituting new issue domains, is complemented by insights on power distribution captured in the historical analysis. From the literature review and in combination with the data recorded for this study, a tripartite categorization of mechanisms of governance emerged.

**Legal enshrinement**, covering:

- treaties, conventions, and binding agreements;
- court judgments, policies, legislation, directives with global or regional effects.

**Institutional solidification**, covering:

- specialized bodies, ranging from developing a specialized division within an organization to a dedicated procedure or initiative for an emergent Internet-related topic;
- strategic frameworks/agenda/action plans;
- monitoring and benchmarking tools: benchmarking, ranking, global database, monitoring directory/index).

**Modelling**, covering:

- discursive actions: guiding principles, charters, codes of conduct, principles, dynamic coalitions documents, resolutions, high-level statements, (final) declarations;
- operative guidance: recommendations, toolkits, model laws, guidelines, implementation alliances, model frameworks.
Legal enshrinement refers to instruments that have a binding effect on the signatories. They are generally initiated (and subsequently signed) by states or issued by a public authority such as a court or a supra-national body. Given their particular status under international law, treaties, conventions, and related agreements (e.g. protocols) are only open to state actors. In contrast, court judgments, directives, and binding policies and legislation may target private actors too, while preserving the requirement for a compulsory action.

At the other end of the spectrum, modelling is generally associated with non-binding commitments formally announced. Their purpose may range from indicating a stakeholder’s position to shaping the behaviour and triggering actions by other actors (e.g. setting a standard for the sector). An important distinction is made here between discursive modelling, relying extensively on statements and declarations, and operative guidance tools, which consist of practical recommendations, guidelines, and model documents. Different from the legal enshrinement mechanisms, modelling instruments offer more flexibility and are the result of shorter negotiation processes. Depending on the degree of sophistication, they might require the participation of multiple actors either at the creation or at the implementation stage or in both. Importantly, mechanisms focusing on modelling are open to all actors, from technical bodies and academia to civil society groups and corporate players.

In between these two broad mechanisms we can place a third one, namely institutional solidification, the result of efforts to render a procedure, working group, or concern (more) permanent. Attaching a form of institutional design to a process leaves a trace on the global governance spectrum. Generally involving at least a person on a payroll, or a small secretariat, instances of institutional solidification can also be divided according to intentionality and scope of actions: specialized bodies refer to expert work coordinated in a structured manner (e.g. Committee for Science and Technology for Development, Article 29 Working Party); strategic frameworks, plans of action, and global agenda set objectives for collective work and, more often than not, have funding attached to them; monitoring and benchmarking tools commonly require iterative processes (annual rankings, global database updates, etc.) and require a longer-term financial commitment. The mechanisms of institutional solidification are open to actors aiming to position themselves uniquely, or at least prominently in the governance space.

**Actors**

Understanding who the key actors are and their position over time is a prerequisite for grasping governance patterns, resulting from specific
interactions among a multitude of actors, from individual to institutional ones. International organizations, states, corporations, technical bodies, and civil society groups, while not necessarily unitary actors, follow their specific logics and interests. In negotiating the global rules for governing the Internet, their intersubjective positioning is essential. The way in which roles are specified has an impact on power distribution and on how other actors locate themselves on the governance spectrum.

The coexistence of various actors in policymaking processes represents a key feature of contemporary governance and this is also the case for the Internet. The diversion of resources towards IG policies all around the globe is a noteworthy transformation, from the early days of the Internet as a scientific project at the US Department of Defense to the myriad of social and political programmes currently in place. The explosion of cyber-activities has been met by an unprecedented financial commitment of all the actors involved. In hybrid governance configurations, however, it is more difficult to establish where the financial power lies and, similarly, to clearly determine the accountability links.

Although participation in public consultation or open mailing lists is customary in IG (Radu et al. 2015), decision-making generally rests with an institutional actor. In technical standardization issues, this might be an organization like the Internet Engineering Task Force or the ITU Telecommunications Standardization Sector (ITU-T); in civil liberties cases, it might be a court decision establishing a precedent or a landmark ruling, or a company with millions of users implementing an authoritative policy; in development, an organization taking the lead on an e-skills programme at the regional level or a public institution monitoring multilingual Internet in areas with many different local languages.

Beyond the exercise of mapping agency in IG, analysing how stakeholders act in new issue domains provides two avenues of inquiry: the first regards whether new stakeholders are given central or marginal roles; the second concerns the extent to which they adopt domain-specific approaches, which may result in the creation of new institutions or in institutional innovations. In many cases, such developments might depend on the leadership and entrepreneurship of key individuals, while in others they might result from specific processes of area differentiation or from reactions to critical junctures or global trends.

**Anchoring Practices**

Foundational social practices guide the work of the IG communities. They represent an infrastructure of co-creation based on repeated interaction. As
the literature highlights, practices remain a stable referent because they standardize procedures and facilitate categorization and action. In emerging issue domains, they constitute meaning-making endeavours without which it is impossible to grasp internal dynamics. Moreover, they pattern interactions between individuals, forcing them to go back to known, yet hidden, assumptions and common denominators.

Yet bringing the ‘invisible’ out into the visible is not an easy task methodologically. In global fields that cut across issues and institutions, routines are part of political processes involving communication, negotiation, or contestation. A systematic exercise to pin down the authoritative forces at work within the communities operating in complex fields such as IG exposes the daunting task of capturing interactive processes on the move. This is the first time a praxeological lens is applied in a study of IG spanning developments over more than four decades.

In the exploration of practices and communities, the positioning of the researcher is key to the knowledge one has access to. The selection of events and people, as well as our engagement with them (presentations, interactions, sharing of ideas and arguments) is never neutral. It generally interferes with how routines are conducted, be it by reinforcing them or by challenging them. In the tradition of Bourdieu, who perceived knowledge as relational and political, researchers need to engage in a ‘sociology of sociology’ and inquire about their own position.

Understood as enacted, governance exists through performers. In complex issue domains such as the one under investigation here, it is rarely the case that a handful of individuals can be actively involved in all relevant processes. While individual influence can be identified behind key initiatives, governing practices are important when they are transformative beyond singular agency, for a particular group or community. The inner logic of enduring routines, besides providing the hidden meaning and decoding clues, can also be translated to shed light on how certain actors are empowered and certain activities are legitimized or de-legitimized.

Informed by the theoretical tenets discussed above, the framework of analysis presented here captures various dimensions along which the governance of the Internet can be deconstructed. It explains how the modalities, mechanisms, and anchoring practices of governance can be disentangled in order to grasp the transformations and dominant patterns over time, providing guidance for the empirical analysis. The research design of this study is detailed below.
To address the challenge of interdisciplinary and ongoing development in Internet policymaking, an analytical eclectic approach (Sil and Katzenstein 2010) is adopted in this book, favouring engagement across various research traditions in order to respond to broad research puzzles and real-world complexity. In line with social constructivism, the framework applied here upholds the ontological assumption that no single reality exists, meanings and representations always being shared or collectively formed (Hughes and Sharrock 1997). A single method does not suffice to draw a comprehensive picture of the evolution of a field. An empirically informed analysis of how governance is articulated throughout distinctive periods requires a longitudinal study and a complex research design. Here, this is achieved by combining historical analysis and empirical insights, two approaches that capture sensitively the multiple sociopolitical factors and interactions at work in the expansion of a policy field.

Historical Analysis

Neither the Internet, nor its governance structures emerged in a vacuum. Historical approaches link the nature of governance arrangements with societal and economic shifts, providing insights into the degree to which specific changes are contingent on global transformations. Critical scholarship generally employs chronological research to answer the question of ‘how we got here’, pointing out the dependency, the paths not taken, and the alternatives. A historical reconstruction is also part of a comprehensive periodization effort, revealing the underpinnings of broad trends usually discussed in the lifecycle of an issue domain.

To situate the analysis and explain the emergence of governance, I reconstruct the early history of the Internet along sociopolitical lines, drawing on a variety of original documents and individual accounts. In contrast to other histories of the Internet, this investigation looked specifically at regulatory configurations, actors, and anchoring practices over time. The historical account reveals that tensions over the development of the Internet have been present from the beginning. The use of multiple sources, including personal testimonies, allowed for the corroboration and correlation of insights from active participants and observers, enriching the perspective presented here and complementing the empirical analysis.
However, such an exercise is by definition partial: there is ‘no such thing as a definitive account of any historical episode’ (Gaddis 2001, 308). Despite the recent birth of the Internet, our epistemic access to early developments is limited, often fragmentary and more focused on technological aspects, rather than policy considerations. Generally, some Internet paternity claims enjoy greater support than others; my historical overview addresses this through the examination of multiple independent lines of evidence, subsequently compared with testimonies of actors involved in those processes.

Secondary sources have long been used in IR as documentary evidence (Thies 2002), particularly when the type of investigation is suited for combining materials from different sources. The limitations in such analyses—unwarranted selectivity and investigator bias—were overcome in this study by relying on primary sources that were as close to the event as possible (original memoranda of understanding, speeches, event transcripts, etc.). The input and the complementary information around international negotiations and their formal outcomes were just as useful as the texts of the documents themselves, and their interpretation was facilitated by the triangulation of different sources of information.

In the selection of historical material, consideration was given to alternative background narratives, which enable a more rigorous reading of the genesis and structuration of a nascent issue domain. Not only does it allow us to examine the presence or absence of specific attributes, but it also relies on manifest and latent dimensions to explicate the articulation of governance. Observing the underlying credo and ideology is accomplished here through an analysis of dominant practices, whose methodological underpinnings are explained below.

**Empirical Analysis**

An analysis as comprehensive as the one presented here has not been previously pursued due to the lack of data and the absence of a systematic conceptual framework that permitted a domain-wide scrutiny. With an expanding field of governance, the challenge is twofold: on the one hand, assessing the integration of new issues into discussions as they happen is notoriously difficult, other than for very narrow reporting purposes; on the other hand, such an approach indirectly fixes the boundaries of governance to a specific moment in time. Contrary to this, what this study aims at is building the conceptual toolbox for deconstructing IG by providing an evolutionary perspective.
Dataset and Coding

At the empirical level, the unit of analysis was a governance instrument agreed at the regional or global level with lasting impact in that specific subfield. Among these, the ‘soft’ governance instruments were the most difficult to disentangle, given that modelling activities could take various forms. Ranging from voluntary codes of conduct to model laws, the modelling of other actors’ behaviour was frequently resorted to in a highly sensitive, political context. To avoid the problem of incommensurability, the framework of analysis employed here proposed the exploration of the same dimensions across time and a dialectal basis loyal to the period investigated. The research design put forward here included a mapping of the field based on topical issues, as well as the construction and analysis of the 311 instruments dataset, complemented by insights from daily practices and routines acquired through participant observation. These different aspects thus provide us with possibilities to better theorize the nature and dynamics of governance across time.

To overcome the limitation of present-day categorization applied at a time when certain concepts were not yet in use, I deduced the broad areas of concern historically, investigating the main clusters of issues on which governance efforts were concentrated without pre-empting variation inside these over time. I then combined that with an outcome-oriented, inductive approach that takes all governance instruments on selected topics into account. In constructing the dataset, I was thus guided by two approaches: deductive and inductive. For the latter, I recorded, for each of these sub-areas identified above, formalized instruments of governance ranging from international treaties to voluntary agreements and benchmarking efforts. Cognizant that the 311 governance instruments thus arrived at have a different standing and cannot be treated in the same way, I used the hard–soft law continuum to locate them in broader mechanisms at work.

The extensive data collection exercise was performed between September 2014 and June 2015 and was based on the initial mapping of the Digital Watch observatory and the CSTD mapping exercise. It was later supplemented with information regarding ongoing developments until 2016—relying on primary sources including original texts of the declarations, resolutions, treaties, as well as secondary references to additional materials in press releases, meeting minutes, official documents of different organizations, reports, and homepages. Developments up until September 2018, discussed in Chapter 6, were captured as they happened.

Multiple independent sources were used to cross-validate the relevance of the selected instruments including dedicated websites of specific organizations (European Commission, Council of Europe, OECD, OSCE, etc.),
specific webpages for global events (Global Conference on Cyberspace, Freedom Online Coalition, etc.). This information was complemented by selected media reports, both from media outlets (New York Times, The Economist, Financial Times, The Guardian, Washington Post, BBC, Le Monde, RFI, China Daily) and IG specific sources, such as the GIP Digital Watch newsletter, CircleID, and IPWatch. This cross-validation ensured that important mechanisms did not fall under the radar. As part of the dataset construction, further operationalization and distinctions were drawn, such as the deliberate exclusion of national policies, except where they influenced courses of action critical for IG. For each instrument, I recorded the year of adoption, instrument and origin, whether it was IG-specific or it tangentially covered Internet aspects, whether it was global or regional, and the type of mechanisms it was an instance of.

Studying a myriad of governance mechanisms amid ongoing, incomplete developments renders some instruments more visible than others. As such, this survey, although authoritative and robust, cannot claim to be exhaustive. Similarly, some of the temporal inter-linkages were lost due to the nature of the exercise: when constructing a database, each instrument was assigned a line, rather than being seen as a process; to compensate for this limitation, dynamic aspects were brought back into the discussion through historical analysis and participant testimonials. The coding process and subsequent categorization shed light on the variation of key governance mechanisms across subfields. Moreover, it provided the tools to study events and conditions at the same time, and thus better capture complexity in the IG field. The clustering of mechanisms according to the issues addressed was particularly useful for providing a longitudinal perspective on the evolution of concerns, as discussed in detail in each of the empirical chapters.

Textual Analysis

In the construction of the dataset, many documents were consulted to clarify provisions, mandates, and institutional origin. Some of these were particularly telling of dominant processes in IG, and were thus classified as key texts. The selection of texts was further expanded based on the historical overview to better understand relevant discourses and narratives explaining how the Internet came into being as a global policy field. Occasionally, the texts included mailing list discussions, and analysis of transcripts of video interviews and meetings conducted by important members of the IG community.

The strategy adopted for textual analysis was a flexible one, zooming in when needed to extract particular information of relevance to the historical narrative or to the argument. Particularly telling were the possibilities
to unveil specific language and references to the IG ‘community’. Given the long-term perspective of this study, the documents were never analysed in isolation from one another.

**Participant Observation**

Participating directly in IG discussions over the last seven years was key to grasping the dynamics and interlinks of this nascent field. I used the extensive knowledge acquired in meetings and policy discussions in Geneva and elsewhere to ground this study. My access to these events was facilitated by working closely on IG issues in an academic and professional capacity. As an IG scholar and practitioner, I was partially immersed in the communities I was studying, which allowed me to acquire a broad, evolving understanding of the various processes and relationships hard to capture from formal documents. Beside my participation in conferences, policy meetings, summits, and forums, I also attended social events. These allowed me to observe the articulation of practices and routines, in particular through recurrent participation in global meetings such as the IGF, World Summit on Information Society Forum, or Internet Society and ICANN meetings.

As a member of relevant communities, negotiating access did not pose problems; on the contrary, an internalization of procedures and rules of thumb occurred over time. Dissecting the tacit assumptions and understandings was a strenuous exercise, once I started penetrating the frames of meaning used by those studied. Through their insights, I also gained indirect access to what has happened or was happening in meetings I was not physically present in. Their interpretation, balanced against a thorough reading of relevant outcome documents and numerous meeting minutes and transcripts, guided my analysis.

Throughout this period, I also had numerous in-depth conversations with relevant stakeholders, both formal and informal, around international IG meetings. Many statements disclosed informally provided insights useful for understanding the history of selected practices. Participant observation also allowed me to grasp the internal dynamics and comprehend important details about organizational aspects, both inside and outside the meeting venues. It also aided in locating the positions key players were speaking from and the associated dispositional logics. To limit the potential bias from immersion in the IG community on controversial aspects, I went back to original documents to see the exact wording used, informally asked experts about their opinion, and made an effort to attend a meeting relevant to that discussion, if it was possible.

This prolonged social interaction with members of the IG communities grounded my holistic perspective; it structured the way in which I conceptualized governance as enactment in this book and explains, to a large extent,
my focus on anchoring practices spanning more than four decades. In practice theory, the meaning of routines can only be deciphered if they are both alien and native to the interpreter’s own system of meaning. As an insider, I gained the practical knowledge and tacit know-how that helped me make sense of their strength, while distancing myself enough for a critical reflection. The critical self-investigation, or ‘reflexivity’, represented a constant throughout the writing of this book.

**Synopsis**

Neither fully public nor fully private, neither entirely structured nor ad-hoc, nascent issue areas pose a set of multifaceted analytical and methodological challenges. This chapter proposes an inward journey through the literature, contextualizing the focus of the current research against the highly fragmented global and IG literatures. Although the concept of governance is not uniformly defined across these, the main points of convergence relate to different forms and roles of rule-making, authority, and praxis. Despite its wide engagement with governance concepts across different traditions, existing scholarship offers limited empirical insights on the long-term evolution of issue domains, how they are articulated and constituted in particular contexts, rather than given.

To conceptualize emergent forms of governance, this study proposes a situated analysis that brings together governance shifts, mechanisms, and anchoring practices, based on a novel conceptual and methodological framework. Rather than analysing one institution or a group of stakeholders and defining the *problematique* in advance, this study unpacks broad concepts into the multiple activities that comprise them, observing their emergence, articulation, and displacement or permanentization. Drawing on key tenets from the highly fragmented global and IG scholarship, it singles out the ‘what’, ‘who’, and ‘how’ in the key phases of the development of this field.

Offering a multifaceted exploration of governance, the deconstructive approach adopted here prioritizes the links between governance structures and actors, reflecting on power differentials. The methods used in this exploration include historical and empirical approaches that cover, in a granular manner, the general and the specific aspects of the three key dimensions elaborated in the analytical framework: governing mechanisms, actors, and anchoring practices. This tripartite structure guides the analysis in the next three chapters.