Internet Governance and Human Rights in a Minor Key:

An Anthropological Perspective on Online Reputation Systems and the Thinning of Trust

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> " It's time to put individual and democratic rights at the center of corporate content moderation and government regulation of the companies. "

The global nature of internet regulation:

As we think about the rise of the internet and the corresponding challenges of internet governance, it is important to take note of the ways in which the legal and policy framings that present themselves in this area resonate deeply with heavily studied subjects in anthropology and other humanistic social sciences.

One way to address these questions from an anthropological perspective is to examine the engagements that anthropology has made with the human rights movement.

Convergence with human-rights focused anthropology:

Content moderation is the area of internet governance that most obviously collides with the classic anthropological concerns with culture and cultural relativism. Evaluating the details of user-generated content inevitably begs the question of who is doing the judging and on what basis.

An examination of the ways that rights-focused anthropologists have addressed these concerns provides a productive way to refine and fortify human rights approaches to internet governance.

Gaining new strategies from historical lessons:

The postwar human rights movement shares many similarities with the emergence of internet governance in the digital age. Both of these time periods:

- Represent attempts at creating new forms of global governance.

- Appeal to rhetoric of the diminished salience of national borders and the harms of unqualified national (or corporate) sovereignty.

- Employ "constitutionalist" approaches—lists of rights meant to constrain the abuse of power.

- Attempt to intervene in geopolitical conflicts that are talked about on a "civilizational" scale—e.g., consider the tense East-West dynamics of the "The Great Firewall of China."

- Are initiatives that struggle with the reality of "American exceptionalism" and its "unique mission to transform the world."

Read the full article in the Yale Journal of Law & Technology, Volume 23.