

# Protocol Politics



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The Internet has reached a critical point. The world is running out of Internet

addresses. There is a finite supply of approximately 4.3 billion Internet Protocol (IP) addresses—the unique binary numbers required for every exchange of information over the Internet—within the Internet's prevailing technical architecture (IPv4). In the 1990s the Internet standards community identified the potential depletion of these addresses as a crucial design concern and selected a new protocol (IPv6) that would expand the number of Internet addresses exponentially—to 340 undecillion addresses. Despite a decade of predictions about imminent global conversion, IPv6 adoption has barely begun. IPv6 is not backward compatible with IPv4, and the ultimate success of IPv6 depends on a critical mass of IPv6 deployment, even among users who don't need it, or on technical workarounds that could in turn create a new set of concerns.

Protocol Politics examines what's at stake politically, economically, and technically in the selection and adoption of a new Internet protocol. Laura DeNardis's key insight is that protocols are political. IPv6 serves as a case study for how protocols more generally are intertwined with socioeconomic and political order. IPv6 intersects with provocative topics including Internet civil liberties, U.S. military objectives, globalization, institutional power struggles, and the promise of global democratic freedoms. DeNardis offers recommendations for Internet standards governance, based not only on technical concerns but on principles of openness and transparency, and examines the global implications of looming Internet address scarcity versus the slow deployment of the new protocol designed to solve this problem.

Information Revolution and Global Politics series

"In this remarkable, illuminating book, Laura DeNardis demonstrates that technoscience is politics and that Internet protocols are embedded with values, not simply ones and zeros. Protocol Politics offers a truly interdisciplinary perspective: DeNardis has a scientist's grasp of the technology, the social scientist's insight into the interests at stake, and the humanist's concern to build an Internet that promotes human values. This is a must read for anyone interested in one of the most important political fights of the twenty-first century."

—Madhavi Sunder, Professor of Law, University of California, Davis

"How can a string 32 (or 128) of binary numbers get involved in international debates about the Global South, citizens' rights, market economics, and Bush era unilateralism? In this lucid work, DeNardis weaves a wonderful tale about internet addressing—demonstrating the wider thesis that the arcane world of standards setting is a site of some of today's great questions, and that we as citizens should understand and be engaged in these debates."

—Geoffrey C. Bowker, Mellon Professor of Cyberscholarship, School of Information Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

"A fascinating account of a societywide technological upgrade that affects us all. DeNardis uses the ongoing drama of a new Internet protocol—IPv6—to explore in depth how standards and governance are related."

—Milton L. Mueller, Professor, Information Studies, Syracuse University

作者介绍:

Laura DeNardis is Executive Director of the Yale Information Society Project, a Lecturer

at Yale Law School, and the coauthor of Information Technology in Theory.

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