Freedom of Association and Internet Infrastructure

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Objective: to document forms of association and assembly (including protest) that do not have a negative impact on the Internet infrastructure.

Central question:

How does the Internet architecture enable and/or inhibit freedom of association and assembly?

Assembly & Association

1. Assembly: an intentional and **temporary gathering** of a collective in a private or public.

2. Association: individuals or entities **formally brought together** to collectively act, express, promote, pursue or defend something.

Freedom: both rights protect the possibility to join or leave a group of choice.

Is the Internet itself an association…?

IETF is an assembly, even an association [RFC3233]

RFCs would not be possible without freedom of association and assemble, online and offline.

The word "protocol" found its way into the language of computer networking → need for collective agreement among network users.

Cases and examples

A. Free association
- Peer to peer [P2P]
- Mailing lists

B. Forced association
- DDoS
- ISPs

Which model is better for freedom of assembly and association?

- Centralized
- Decentralized

Why?

Preliminary Conclusions

- Internet has impact for on the ability for people to exercise their right to freedom of association and assembly.
- The Internet itself might be a form of association and assembly, and should be protected as such.
- To get access to the Internet one could argue one is caught in a forced assembly with the access network.

Comments?

Are we missing something?