On Friday October 17 2008 US Internet governance expert [Milton Mueller](#) held his inaugural speech as XS4all Professor at Technical University Delft (The Netherlands). I took the train from Amsterdam to attend the event. The text will be available in a little while, as a booklet, and hopefully online as well, but I will give an improvised summary here. Milton Mueller already started this part-time in 2007 and has already appointed a few PhD students who will assist him in the research, the German activist researcher [Ralf Bendrath](#) being one of them. As I heard it took almost eight years from the first idea to fund an "xs4all professor" (buitengewoon hoogleraar) to this official acceptance speech. Concerning Milton Mueller it was worth waiting for. I am not 100% if I am on the same side as Mueller, politically speaking, but in terms of mapping the critical issues concerning Internet governance there are only a few that match Milton Mueller's critical insights. Mueller has been working out of Syracuse, New York for the last decade or so and now seems to be building up a parallel life in Europe. In the archives of nettime and CircleID you can find no less than three interviews that I did with Milton Mueller, making him my most favourite interview partner. What I like about Mueller's work is that he's not going for the easy answers. For Milton Mueller there are no roads back to the 1980s innocent paradise when the Internet was inhabited by white, geek academic males, working out of engineering departments. Early Internet freedom was accidental, a historical anomaly, not some universal law, written in timeless, meta-cultural software.

In his 30 minutes speech Milton Mueller spoke about the design organization of the Internet beyond the outdated image of the distributed, chaotic and open network in which anything was possible. Mueller's social science approach is one beyond regulation as control or non-interference as a dogma. For Mueller Code is Law, not in the sense of Lawrence Lessig but in the way Friedrich Hayek understood it. He described his methodology as "institutionalism," not in the ordinary sense of large anonymous buildings but as a set of norms and rules that rule this technical environment. Because of the shifts in power from national to global governance there is a need of "intermediary responsibility." This is most felt at the local and national level of the Internet Service Providers, the ISPs, who are forced by government to hand over user data or have to install filters, as recently proposed in Australia. Mueller will have a special focus in his research on ISPs (his sponsor xs4all is a Dutch boutique ISP owned by KPN). The latest development here is the so-called Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) research in which providers monitor 'live', for instance  into malware bandwidth file sharing. Instead of only seeing regulation as evil Big Brother measures,

Milton Mueller proposed that "rules are there to make people free, not to tell them what to do." Rights are claims and rules can liberate—just so that you know!