Introduction to Technology and Policy (ESD.10)  
Fall 2001

Assignment #2 – IT Case: Architecture Memo  
Assigned: September 21, 2001  
Due: September 24, 2001

Background

Lessig, in chapter seven and the appendix of Code, sets out a framework for analyzing how the behavior of individuals may be regulated, whether through law, markets, norms, or what he calls “architecture.” While Lessig primarily applies his idea to information technology and the Internet, it is generalizable to other policy problems.

Your assignment is to pick a policy problem – a way in which society governs or circumscribes individual behavior. You should pick a policy problem that reflects your own background and research interests and write an essay that articulates how architecture/technologies support or undermine the other three modalities. This is not a research assignment; you should be thinking through and recasting what you already know. If you want to check specific facts or search for sources to help you frame your argument, you may, but spend no more than half an hour doing so.

Deliverables

You are required to turn in an essay (up to 5 double-spaced pages), that:

● Briefly sets out the policy problem you are discussing.

● Discusses, in the context of this policy problem, how architecture constrains, enables or reinforces the influences of the other three modalities, and how the other three in turn affect it – as well as how the focus of this effort, the individual, might push back!

● Characterizes the extent to which architecture is part of the formal policy discussion. Is the architecture mentioned at all? If so, is it viewed as part of the problem, part of the solution or both? If not, why not?

● Finally, what does Lessig’s architecture metaphor add to the framing of the policy debate? Does it suggest policy alternatives that are not part of the current discussion? Or does it suggest underlying issues that are being left out, to the detriment of the policy process?

If you choose to use researched materials in your essay, make sure to cite them and please attach a short list of references.