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**Am I my IP address’ keeper?**

While the IP address is seen as an irrelevant piece of information for most internet users, its importance for internet governance is incontestable. Its role in the internet’s infrastructure is central: without it, computers could not find the servers they attempt to access on the network.

Exactly how the IP address should be treated is rather unclear, however. Should it be seen as a phone number, a mail address or an identifier? Can the actions performed by a computer with a specific IP address be attributed to a person? And if so, can illegal file-sharers be prosecuted on the grounds that the IP address of their home network was used to share protected content without permission? At the same time as rights holders attempt to equate IP addresses with internet users, marketers are struggling to achieve the opposite. They argue that IP addresses are not personal data, unless in the hands of telecommunications companies where they are retained for billing purposes, and in some cases, law enforcement.

The clash between the so-called relative approach and broad approach to personal data pertaining to the IP address is at most apparent in the different drafting stages of the new General Data Protection Regulation. The purpose of this paper is thus to explore the nature of the IP address by addressing normative assumptions associated with its use in copyright enforcement, behavioural advertising and law enforcement.