

Politicologenetmaal 2019

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WORKSHOP TITLE: Good bye, anarchy? Internet politics in the 21st century
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Short description Our panel aims at unfolding the tensions around the regulation of the internet. Which actors try to limit internet freedoms, which actors try to defend them, and what are their motivations? What is the institutional context of their contestations? And finally, what could the internet look like in the future?
Long abstract Conventional wisdom perceives the internet as a free harbor for all kinds of social, cultural, and economic interactions. At least implicitly, this perception is linked to the internet pioneers' vision of a digital sphere of freedom and independence. Empirically, however, this perception can hardly be upheld anymore. National and international authorities are increasingly interfering with the internet via regulation in various fields. The prevention of hate speech and fake news upright to online censorship are the most prominently discussed examples. But international organizations and bureaucracies also limit the openness of the internet by intellectual property and privacy regulations, the persecution of cybercrime and cyberterrorism, and intermediary liability regulation. At the same time, large private companies (e.g. Google, Facebook) are increasingly dominating the most popular spaces within the internet and create entry barriers for newcomers. At the same time, however, we are witnessing countervailing dynamics. For instance, the European Commission refers to antitrust measures to avoid oligopolistic strictures, and the European Parliament understands itself as the guardian of net neutrality. Simultaneously, civil society actors defend the openness of the internet both inside and outside the institutionalized decision-making structures. While their engagement for internet freedom is essentially based on idealistic motivations, many dark net participants also have commercial reasons to insist on an uncontrolled digital sphere. Our panel aims at unfolding the tensions around the regulation of the digital sphere. Which actors try to limit internet freedoms, which actors try to defend them, and what are their motivations? What is the institutional context (national, international, global) of their contestations? And finally, what are the immediate consequences, and what could the internet look like in the future? We are looking forward to empirical (both quantitative and qualitative), conceptual, and normative contributions.
Please send your abstract (max 300 words) and contact details to Daniëlle Flonk and Thomas R. Eimer by March 15, 2018, at the latest.