



DIGITAL AUTHORITARIANISM RESEARCH LAB

DARL

Confronting Technofeudalism and Digital Authoritarianism

Challenges and Solutions for the European Regulation

International Scientific Conference

organised by

Digital Authoritarianism Research Lab (DARL), Eötvös Loránd
University (ELTE), Faculty of Law

in cooperation with

Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), Faculty of Social Sciences

October 17–18, 2025

Budapest, Hungary

Faculty Council Room (Ground Floor)

17 October 2025 (Friday, CET)

08:30 – 08:50	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	Keynote Speech Chair: Tamás Dezső ZIEGLER (Eötvös Loránd University) Alfred C. YEN (Boston College) (<i>online via Teams</i>): Deploying the Feudalism Metaphor: Promise and Peril
09:30 – 09:45	Keynote Q&A
09:45 – 10:30	Coffee Break & Group Picture
10:30 – 10:40	Welcome remarks on behalf of the host institution Réka SOMSSICH Dean, Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Law
10:45 – 11:45	Section 1: Governance meets technofeudalism Chair: Tamás Dezső ZIEGLER (Eötvös Loránd University) - Cătălin Gabriel STĂNESCU (University of Southern Denmark): Regulating the Spectacle: Technopopulism, the Broligarchy, and the EU's Performative Dilemma - Attila MENYHÁRD (Eötvös Loránd University): Rule of Law and Technofeudalism - Tuba ELDEM (Fenerbahçe University – Sofia Centre for Advanced Study): Algorithmic Governance, Digital Technologies, and the Rise of Post-Truth Politics
11:45 – 13:00	Lunch (all by themselves)
13:00 – 14:00	Section 2: The illusion of freedom Chair: János Tamás PAPP (Pázmány Péter Catholic University) - Carmen MOLDOVAN (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași): The Metamorphosis of Free Expression in the Digital World and the Illusion of Freedom - German A. DUARTE (Hebrew University of Jerusalem): From Surveillance to Interveillance: Rethinking Digital Regulation in the Age of Algorithmic Subjectivity - Gergely GOSZTONYI (Eötvös Loránd University): The applicability of technofeudalism and sovereignty in the growing digital authoritarianist digital ecosystem

14:00 – 15:00	Section 3: How (not to) make policies? Chair: Carmen MOLDOVAN (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași) • Tamás Dezső ZIEGLER – Thomas BUIJNINK (Eötvös Loránd University): Regulating Algorithms in the EU: Future Principles • Boldizsár SZENTGÁLI-TÓTH – Rudolf BERKES (ELTE Centre for Social Sciences): The impact of AI-enabled autocratic surveillance on the right of assembly in the EU: one amongst the latest source of inequalities • Alexei ANISIN (University of Pardubice): The Tragedy of the Digital Commons: Why Artificial Intelligence Won't be Regulated
15:00 – 15:30	Coffee break
15:30 – 16:30	Section 4: Comparative approaches on internet regulation Chair: Gergely GOSZTONYI (Eötvös Loránd University) • Hossein KERMANI (University of Vienna): Hate speech as an act of suppression: A temporal analysis of hate speech on Persian Twitter • Mo LI (Polytechnic University of Valencia): From Beijing to Brussels: Comparative Governance of Online Expression • Kyoungsic MIN (Sungkyunkwan University): Regulatory Voids and Hollow Assessments: How South Korea's 2025 AI Act Abets Digital Authoritarianism
16:30 – 17:30	Section 5 (Hybrid Section): How technofeudal power is created Chair: Gergely Ferenc LENDVAI (Ludovika University of Public Service) • Matteo STOCCHETTI (University of Helsinki, Åbo Akademi) (<i>online via Teams</i>): History, social order and cycles of oppression/emancipation. Critical reflections on technofeudalism • Freyja VAN DEN BOOM (Bournemouth University): Narrative Capture and Legal Resilience: Unmasking Technofeudal Power in EU AI Governance • Çağdaş BAŞAR BAHAR (Istanbul University): Techno-Feudal Europe without Feudal Overlords
19:00 – 21:00	Dinner, Networking

18 October 2025 (Saturday, CET)

8:30 – 8:50	Registration
9:00 – 10:00	Section 6: Governing platforms Chair: János Tamás PAPP (Pázmány Péter Catholic University) - Jasmin HASANOVIĆ (University of Sarajevo): From the Land to the Data: Rethinking Sovereignty in the Age of Technofeudalism - Simona VELEVA (American University in Bulgaria): Freedom of the Media in the Age of Platforms: Media Regulation in the Context of the Interplay Between the European Media Freedom Act and the Digital Services Act - Julian A. MORGAN (Humboldt University): Platform Governmentality and the Limits of EU Digital Regulation: Epistemic Power in the Age of Technofeudalism
10:00 – 11:00	Section 7: Towards a democratic legal framework Chair: Daniella HUSZÁR (Eötvös Loránd University) - Iana KAZEEVA (University of Vienna): Democracy or Authoritarianism: Alarming Trends in European Digital Policy. The Case of Messaging Services - Roland KELEMEN – Zsófia RÉTI – Dorka BOSITS (Széchenyi István University): The Evolution of Toxic Speech in Hungary: A Comparative Analysis Between the Socialist Era and the Post-2010 Social Media Age - Anthony KELLY (University College Dublin): Regulating the monetisation of reactionary political speech in the European Union: An audience-centred approach
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break

11:30 – 12:30	Section 8: Public control and the internet Chair: Jasmin HASANOVIĆ (University of Sarajevo) • Carmen Tamara UNGUREANU (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași): DGA, Data Altruism and Big Tech at a Crossroads? • Zsuzsa DETREKŐI (Media Journalism Research Center): The Russian disinformation campaign • Amanda Grace MORRISON (Stanford University): Stripped Scrutiny. The Weaponization of New Tech Laws against Public Participation in the EU
12:30 – 13:00	Closure

Organising Committee

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National Research, Development and Innovation Fund (ADVANCED_24 funding scheme)

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Keynote Speech
17 October 2025 (Friday)



Alfred C. Yen

Professor of Law and Dean's Distinguished Scholar

Boston College Law School

Deploying the Feudalism Metaphor: Promise and Peril

Scholars deploy the term “technofeudalism” in the belief that metaphor can persuade. For those familiar with feudalism’s reality, application of the metaphor draws attention to a rising tide of authoritarianism and social stratification. An optimist will understandably see the possibility of a salutary regulatory or even political response.

However, caution is also warranted because others, including the general public, may not be truly familiar with feudalism’s reality. For example, Americans may not fear feudalism because American popular culture often glorifies medieval societies ruled by inherently just and great kings who rightfully possess complete authority over their kingdoms. In this fictionalized world, establishing or restoring authoritarian rule becomes the right thing to do.

This raises the possibility that the feudal metaphor could turn the internet’s “bugs” into “features.” If people hear “feudalism” and have romanticized visions of Camelot, they may consider attractive, or at least benign, the feudal aspects of the internet. This suggests a need for care to ensure that the feudal metaphor does not wind up facilitating the very authoritarianism its deployment was intended to stop.

Short bio

Alfred C. Yen is Professor of Law and Dean’s Distinguished Scholar at Boston College Law School, where he was Associate Dean of Academic Affairs from 2002-2002 and Associate Dean of Faculty from 2015-2018. Professor Yen has also served as Visiting Professor of Law at Harvard Law School in the spring of 2025, Visiting Scholar at the University of Arizona since 2012 and as an Invited Professor at the University of Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne from 2018-2024. From 2020-2024, he

was the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of the Copyright Society, a leading peer-reviewed journal. Professor Yen teaches in the areas of intellectual property, torts, and sports law.

Professor Yen has authored numerous articles about copyright and trademark law, including the casebook Copyright Law: Essential Cases and Materials, Fifth Edition (forthcoming 2025, West Publishing), co-authored with Joseph Liu. His works include articles about secondary copyright liability, aesthetic theory and copyright, the proper use of forensic musicology, the First Amendment and copyright, the regulation of college sports recruiting, and waivers of tort liability in the context of sports. He is presently counsel of record for amici curiae Intellectual Property Law Scholars in the case of Cox v. Sony before the United States Supreme Court.

Professor Yen helped found the Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty and served as Chair of the AALS Section on Minority Groups and the AALS Section on Law and Sports. Professor Yen holds degrees from Stanford University and Harvard Law School.

Abstracts

Section 1

Cătălin-Gabriel Stănescu: Regulating the Spectacle: Technopopulism, the Broligarchy, and the EU's Performative Dilemma

This presentation contributes to a revised theory of technological populism, focusing on how a new political-financial elite, what some have called the Broligarchy (Musk, Zuckerberg, Bezos, and their orbit), co-opts the logic of digital regulation to reinforce, rather than restrain, their power. Endorsed and shielded by the MAGA movement, this cohort transforms regulatory confrontation into political capital, recasting EU oversight as proof of elite persecution and platform censorship. Using recent DSA enforcement actions in 2025, including Musk's selective transparency tactics at X, Meta's compliance theatre, and the Trump Administration's rhetorical offensive against Brussels, the presentation argues that the EU's digital rulebook has become part of the populist spectacle. The Broligarchy does not just reject regulation outright; it also stages it. Fines, audits, and algorithmic demands are reframed as badges of honour in an anti-elite crusade. This performance feeds a cycle in which formal legal compliance is simulated just enough to avoid systemic exclusion, while the deeper structures of content moderation, user targeting, and political mobilisation remain untouched. European regulators, in turn, are trapped in a symbolic game they did not design: one in which their authority is invoked but rarely enforced in substance. The presentation asks: what happens when law is no longer a constraint on platform power, but a prop within its narrative?"

Short bio

Cătălin Gabriel Stănescu is Associate Professor in Private Law at the University of Southern Denmark. His research centres on the legal governance of informal credit, digital financial ecosystems, and platform-based power, with a particular focus on informal and digital personal credit, technological populism and regulatory transformation. He holds degrees in law and political science from Al.I.Cuza University (Iași), the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (Bucharest), and Central European University (LL.M. and Ph.D., summa cum laude). He has held academic positions at the University of Copenhagen and has been a visiting researcher at the Max Planck Institute (Hamburg), the National University of Singapore, the European University Institute (Florence), Babeș-Bolyai University (Cluj), and the University of Szeged. His recent book, *EU Informal Debt Collection Regulation: Failure by Design?*, was published by Oxford University Press

in 2025 and translated into German (Nomos) and Romanian (Tact). He is currently working on a monograph exploring technological populism and platform governance.

Attila Menyhárd: Rule of Law and Technofeudalism

The governance of modern societies rests on three pillars: power, territory and the control of the power. Sovereignty assumes power and territory. The scope of the power of the state is defined by territory and a great part of the law follows the territorial principle. Control is provided by the mechanisms of rule law, emerged primarily on the grounds of the idea of social contract. All of those elements of governance of modern society are dissolved as the result of digitalization and platform economy. Digitalization challenges the territorial principle: data and other digital assets do not have a location and platforms provide unlimited cross-border services via internet. Services provided by Internet Service Providers (ISP) and Online Services Providers (OSP) are deemed as essential facilities. Thus, there is a shift in power from States to private companies. States, however, do have a social control over their power provided by the idea of rule of law. The dissolution of territorial principles and the shift of power centres is a matter of fact and the proper reaction of the societies would be extending the idea of rule of law to control the power of such companies. ISPs and OSPs govern their external legal relationships to the citizens via their standard contract terms. Such terms are working similar way to legal rules: they create norms without the actual consent of the the parties for whom they are applied, because they work on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. Contracts this way become unilateral constraints. The main pillars of the idea of rule of law should be “re-invented” in this environment in order to provide control of such power of companies. That is why thinking on terms of fundamental rights like anti-discrimination law, constitutional constraints are of primary importance and control of standard contract terms of such companies should be similar to control of law-making process of state.

Short bio

He is a professor at the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Eötvös Loránd University, a member of the Oppenheim Law Firm, and a research professor at the NKE Information Society Research Institute. He is a member of the UNIDROIT Governing Council and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He headed the Department of Civil Law at ELTE Faculty of Law between 2006 and 2022 and was Dean of the Faculty between 2016 and 2019. Between 2014 and 2022, he served as Director of the ELTE Institute for Continuing Legal Education. He is a listed arbitrator of the Permanent Court of Arbitration operating alongside the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and

Industry, with domestic and international arbitration experience. He participates in legislative projects and played an active role in the preparation of the Civil Code. He participates in numerous domestic and international research programs. He is a member of the European Institute for Tort and Insurance Law, the European Law Institute, the Robotics and AI Law Society, the International Bar Association, and the American Bar Association. He is a regular researcher at the Max Planck Institute in Hamburg, which specializes in civil law and international private law issues.

Tuba Eldem: Algorithmic Governance, Digital Technologies, and the Rise of Post-Truth Politics

It is now commonplace to observe that we live in an era defined by post-truth politics and populism. Since 2016—when the Oxford English Dictionary designated “post-truth” as its word of the year amidst Brexit disinformation and Donald Trump’s ascension to power—scholars have documented the convergence of populist politics with the erosion of factual authority. While both concepts are contested, a growing literature has demonstrated how post-truth politics reshapes political discourse by privileging emotionally charged narratives, identity affirmation, and epistemic polarization over evidence-based reasoning and democratic deliberation.

This presentation investigates how the transformation of the media ecosystem—particularly the rise of digital platforms, algorithmic curation, and AI-driven content governance—has structurally enabled the emergence and persistence of post-truth politics. Social media algorithms optimize for engagement and emotional intensity, reinforcing filter bubbles, echo chambers, and ideological silos. The collapse of traditional gatekeeping institutions and the proliferation of mis- and disinformation have given rise to an “informational chaos” where truth becomes fragmented, contested, and subordinate to virality.

Drawing on recent literature in political communication, populism studies, and digital governance, this presentation argues that post-truth politics should not be understood solely as a discursive or cultural pathology, but as an emergent political condition deeply embedded in the structural logic of techno-feudalism and platform capitalism. It concludes by assessing the implications of this shift for democratic governance, trust, deliberative communication, and the viability of pluralistic political life.

Short bio

Dr. Tuba Eldem is a Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Study (Sofia), where she researches the rise and impact of post-truth populism. She is also an Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center on Cyberspace Studies at Fenerbahçe University, Istanbul. Her work bridges comparative politics, international security, and digital governance, with a particular focus on Turkey in a global context. Her research spans four interrelated areas: civil-military relations and security sector reform, with a focus on democratic control, military effectiveness, and the political role of armed forces; cyberspace governance, cyber sovereignty, and cybersecurity policy, including the potential of decentralised technologies to challenge censorship and reshape sovereignty; Turkey's evolving geopolitical positioning, from strategic narratives during the Russia-Ukraine war to its role in NATO and Eurasian connectivity; and finally populism, authoritarianism, and post-truth politics examining how leaders deploy securitisation, emotional appeals, and disinformation to consolidate power. Dr. Eldem earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Toronto and has held research fellowships at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP) and Freie Universität Berlin. She has published widely in leading journals and edited volumes.

Section 2

Carmen Moldovan: The Metamorphosis of Free Expression in the Digital World and the Illusion of Freedom

The aim of this presentation is to critically explore the dual nature of the digital environment—as both a space of emancipation and a mechanism of control—and to examine how this contradiction is reflected in the European Union’s current approach to regulating online expression. Originally perceived as a tool for participation, pluralism, and democratic empowerment, the internet has gradually become a space dominated by large private platforms that shape, filter, and curate content according to algorithmic logics and self-made rules. Dominant platforms exert unprecedented influence over the visibility and legitimacy of expression.

This transition marks a fundamental shift: freedom of expression is no longer treated primarily as a fundamental right, but increasingly as a commodity, governed by market incentives, compliance protocols, and platform terms of service. While the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act are promoted as ambitious regulatory frameworks, they tend to entrench, rather than challenge, the private governance of digital discourse. By delegating responsibility for content moderation and risk assessment to private actors, these regulations risk legitimizing structural asymmetries in narrative power. The platform mechanisms often lack democratic accountability and fail to ensure genuine pluralism in the digital public sphere, leading to digital authoritarianism.

The presentation engages with the paradox of freedom in the digital age: the coexistence of formal safeguards and systemic silencing. Adopting a doctrinal and critical legal approach, the presentation aims to address the normative gap between the promise of EU regulation and the lived reality of autonomy in exercising freedom of expression. It explores the tensions between legal protection under Article 11 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the structural conditions of narrative capture in the algorithmically governed information space.

Short bio

Dr. Carmen Moldovan is a Full Professor (PhD, habil.) of Public International Law at the Law Faculty of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași, Romania. She also serves as Vice-Dean and is a co-founder of the Centre for International Law at the Faculty. Additionally, she teaches courses on Freedom of Expression, International Criminal Law, and International Law for Sustainable

Development. Carmen has also served as an expert in Public International Law for the MAC Protocol Supervisory Authority Ad Hoc Committee, established by the UNIDROIT Governing Council. She earned her PhD in Law in 2012 with a focus on the limitations imposed by Criminal Law on freedom of expression. Carmen also holds a Postgraduate Diploma in Private International Law and a Bachelor's Degree in Law from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University. Carmen has participated in several teaching exchanges in international law and human rights at universities in Spain, the Czech Republic, Italy, and France. She is involved in various international projects, including the European Campus of City Universities (EC2U). Furthermore, she has attended courses at the Hague Academy of International Law, the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, and the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, and she has undertaken research visits at the European Court of Human Rights and Orleans University.

German A. Duarte: From Surveillance to Interveillance: Rethinking Digital Regulation in the Age of Algorithmic Subjectivity

As Europe advances its digital regulatory agenda through the DSA, DMA, GDPR, and the AI Act, policy frameworks remain largely shaped by the legacy of surveillance — focused on protecting individual privacy and preventing state overreach. Yet this focus risks missing a deeper, less visible transformation already underway: a shift from surveillance to interveillance, in which individuals become active participants in the codification of social life through ubiquitous algorithmic systems.

This presentation introduces interveillance as a socio-technical condition where human agency and algorithmic infrastructures co-produce behavioral norms, desires, and subjectivities. Rather than being merely observed, individuals now contribute—knowingly or not—to systems that render nearly all aspects of human activity legible, actionable, and computationally manipulable. Drawing on critical media theory, reification, and cognitive capitalism, the presentation argues that the real challenge is not simply institutional surveillance, but the unnoticed normalization of total behavioral codification embedded in everyday media practices.

While current regulation tends to focus on privacy and data protection, it fails to confront the broader epistemic and ontological consequences of living in an environment where algorithmic devices continuously model, anticipate, and reshape human behavior. This interveillant condition risks eroding spaces for ambiguity, opacity, and subjective unpredictability—elements essential to democratic life and human agency.

Rather than proposing new regulatory mechanisms, the presentation calls for a deeper conceptual reorientation. By reframing digital regulation through the lens of interveillance, it invites a critical reconsideration of Europe's digital future—one that goes beyond economic or political asymmetries to confront the unnoticed infrastructures shaping how we know, act, and become in algorithmic culture.

Short bio

German A. Duarte is a media theorist and Distinguished Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His work explores the intersections between critical theory, cognitive capitalism, and algorithmic cultures. He focuses on how speculative narratives and digital dispositifs shape subjectivity, desire, and the conditions of knowledge in contemporary technocultures. He has published extensively on reification and the codification of perception, contributing to broader debates on digital authoritarianism and posthuman imaginaries.

Gergely Gosztanyi: The applicability of technofeudalism and sovereignty in the growing digital authoritarianist digital ecosystem

Concepts of technofeudalism and neomedievalism offer valuable frameworks for understanding the complex and evolving challenges of internet governance and regulation in the contemporary digital era. Neomedievalism can provide an accessible explanation of internet sovereignty, the regulatory needs of states, and the relationship between users and giant platforms. The notion of technofeudalism is in line with the neomedievalist vision of a return to a more fragmented and hierarchical social order. Just as medieval society was characterised by a rigid hierarchy, where the position was primarily determined by birth or loyalty, the technofeudal order is characterised by digital serfdom. This presentation develops the two concepts and shows the possibilities and also the limitations of their applicability for internet governance.

Short bio

He is a Full Professor, a Hungarian lawyer and media researcher. He is the Head of Digital Authoritarianism Research Lab (DARL) at the Faculty of Law of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE). His research interests include global regulation of social media, censorship, deepfake, alternative media and the liability of intermediaries. Since 2015, he has been the lead coach of the Hungarian team for the Monroe E. Price Media Law Moot Court Competition. He has been an expert on

various occasions for the Council of Europe, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, and the National Talent Centre. He is editor of several law journals and has published over 190 articles in Hungarian and international law journals.

Section 3

Tamás Dezső Ziegler – Thomas Buijnink: Regulating Algorithms in the EU: Future Principles

As a consequence of the current technofeudalistic legal framework, algorithms remain significantly underregulated within the European Union. This underregulation may have long-term, potentially devastating effects on European culture and the political architecture of the EU. However, regulating this critical field without carefully crafted principles for future legislation risks causing more harm than good, especially since the internet has become the primary source of information for many. In this chapter, I propose a new, three-layered system of principles to serve as the intellectual foundation for future regulatory efforts. The first layer involves positioning EU regulation between the extremes of Chinese control and American market liberalism (market fundamentalism). While there is ample scope for regulation within the EU, it is essential first to ask: what form of market regulation best aligns with European values and interests? The second layer focuses on establishing clear objectives by identifying current negative trends and defining the goals we aim to achieve through targeted regulation. Finally, the third layer involves formulating concrete principles for algorithm governance in specific fields, such as YouTube regulation, search engine regulation, and similar areas. This layer must also address the fundamental question of the appropriate scope and depth of legislative intervention. Only after thoroughly addressing these three stages should legislative action be undertaken.

Short bios

Tamás Dezső Ziegler is a lawyer from Budapest, Hungary, currently an associate professor at Eötvös Loránd University and a fellow of the London School of Economics Higher Education blog. He holds a law (dr. jur) degree from Pázmány Péter Catholic University, a PhD from Széchenyi István University. His expertise spans EU law and European studies, international business law, and private international law, with a focus on the social and political science dimensions of law and policy-making. He has extensive academic experience, having taught and conducted research at numerous international institutions and participated in various European research projects and legal counsel roles.

Thomas Buijnink is a PhD Candidate in the International Studies PhD programme, Doctoral School of Sociology, Eötvös Loránd University. Prior to arriving in Hungary, he studied at Radboud University, and in the joint Erasmus Mundus MA program on Euroculture by the Université de Strasbourg, Jagellonian University and Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen. He was also an

exchange student at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. His research topic is the EU's budgetary governance.

Boldizsár Szentgáli-Tóth – Rudolf Berkes: The impact of AI-enabled autocratic surveillance on the right of assembly in the EU: one amongst the latest source of inequalities

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a potent general-purpose technology, with many opportunities, however, the way this technology is being developed, deployed and used, carries potential risks and disruption to current political systems. The capacity of AI to enhance state surveillance and repression emerges as a critical concern, as it can directly impact the exercise of our human rights. Although surveillance of citizens' and consumers' behavior is not a new phenomenon, AI enables the automation of this process, eradicating financial and practical disincentives to conduct surveillance. States now have a greater capability to conduct simultaneous, invasive, targeted and broad-scale surveillance than ever before. As AI systems are far from exempt from various vulnerabilities and algorithmic biases, these increased capabilities, without proper safeguards, pose risks to fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of assembly and association. Although the EU AI Act laid out an in-principle ban on live mass facial recognition and other public biometric surveillance by police, many scholars fear that the wide exceptions to this ban may pave the way to legitimize the use of these systems.

In the presentation we will investigate how the rise of AI-enabled autocratic surveillance of assemblies and further political activities disfavours marginalized social groups, impacts their right to freedom of assembly and association and what kind of measures should be implemented to safeguard their fundamental rights in the EU. A selection of case studies will be assessed which could reveal how specific AI technologies have been used in EU countries, offering insights into the effectiveness, constitutional safeguards to their use, unintended consequences and impact on fundamental rights, and potential legal reflections on the European level. An initial list of interesting case studies could include Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Slovakia.

Short bios

Boldizsár Szentgáli-Tóth is a senior research fellow at the HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Legal Studies (Budapest). He obtained his PhD degree in February 2019, his dissertation was also published as a volume by the Eötvös Publisher, and the publication of the English adaptation by Springer is also underway. He has published or co-authored around 175

articles in different constitutional law fields. At the same time, he has also presented the outcome of his research several times in Hungary and even elsewhere around fifty times. He has been awarded various prizes from the past years, while he is also the managing editor or editor of further legal reviews. He has been the chair of OTKA no. 138366. dealing with the establishment of a global database on the constitutional case law under the pandemic; while he has been also the coordinator of the Visegrad Project no. 22120065., which focuses on elections under public health emergencies. He is actively taking part in more COST actions, while he has been awarded the lead of a five-year-long project by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Lendület/Momentum Research Group on Algorithmic Constitutionalism (LP2024-20/2024). He serves from May 2024. as the co-president of the Hungarian Young Academy.

Rudolf Berkes is a project researcher at HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Legal Studies (Budapest) and a (upcoming) doctoral student at the Ludovika University of Public Service. He is working full-time on a five-year-long project by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Lendület/Momentum Research Group on Algorithmic Constitutionalism (LP2024-20/2024) under the lead of Boldizsár Szentgáli-Tóth. His background is in political science, more specifically security studies. He previously worked in the Hungarian think tank sector focused on international security, disinformation and autocratization, co-authoring over 50 research reports, blog posts and presenting them at international conferences or to the media.

Alexei Anisin: The Tragedy of the Digital Commons: Why Artificial Intelligence Won't be Regulated

Discussions about regulating artificial intelligence (AI) are becoming increasingly frequent in both public and academic debates, and there is a palpable sense of urgency stemming from the impending threat of the development of artificial general intelligence (AGI). On the one hand, many want to regulate AI and believe that mechanisms can be developed, whether on sub-national, national, or international levels. On the other hand, others think we are far from being able to understand the blackbox of AI operations, and hence, are facing an existential set of crises. This presentation adds to the latter sentiment and argues that future malignant AI systems will not be able to be regulated on a global level due to a classical collective action problem that has hitherto plagued global efforts to regulate nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, and other key phenomena. The implications of this argument point to an urgent necessity of theorizing ethical responses to digital commons dominated by AI and a technology that is outpacing human understanding of it.

Short bio

Dr. Alexei Anisin is a scholar that has authored five monographs and dozens of studies on interdisciplinary topics across social science. He is currently undergoing a research fellowship at the Centre for Ethics as Study in Human Value, University of Pardubice (supported by the European Research Council).

Section 4

Hossein Kermani: Hate speech as an act of suppression: A temporal analysis of hate speech on Persian Twitter

This research project investigates the actors, networks, and practices of hate speech (HS) on Persian Twitter during the Women, Life, Freedom movement to understand by whom and to what extent this malicious activity was used to discredit activists and suppress the movement. Hate speech and incivility are pertinent concerns in the contemporary social media space. While there is an ongoing body of literature on HS, the extant line of study focuses on Western (mainly) democratic contexts. Additionally, less scholarly attention has been paid to HS and incivility during social media protests in authoritarian regimes where different political camps fight with each other on Twitter. HS could be used to discredit activists and suppress anti-regime movements by authoritarian political systems. However, this aspect of HS has been neglected by scholars to a great extent. Moreover, the authoritarian regimes' use of HS in this regard is not always obvious. These regimes could penetrate anti-regime camps to propel their nefarious aim of dividing and conquering dissident communities. This presentation tries to address these gaps by empirically focusing on the Women, Life, Freedom movement (WLF), i.e., #MahsaAmini, on the Iranian Twittersphere (Persian Twitter).

HS in this project is classified into Pejorative messages (disrespectful), Insult (offensive language), and threatening messages. I have collected all relevant tweets, i.e., tweets with #MahsaAmini in Farsi, from September 15, 2022 to April 30, 2023. The data collection resulted in a large dataset of 529,326,899 tweets. To analyze the data, I will create the retweet network as the main network of information dissemination. Then, I will use Social Network Analysis to detect the main communities in the retweet network. Having identified the main communities, I will split tweets in each community and analyze them on a monthly basis. In this step, I will use the ChatGPT language model (the latest 4.1 model) to investigate the changes and dynamics of HS in each community. I will use human coders afterward to check the validity of the model's output. In this step, I will leverage ChatGPT to identify the type, target (name), and reason for HS. Results will then be contrasted and compared to investigate how types and targets of HS attacks changed in each community over time.

Short bio

Hossein Kermani is a senior researcher at the Political Communication Research Group of the University of Vienna, Austria. He is the principal investigator of the BeyondCBA project, which is funded by WWTF.

Mo Li: From Beijing to Brussels: Comparative Governance of Online Expression

What becomes of freedom of expression when digital content is proactively shaped and restricted by state laws, platform rules, and algorithms? As social media platforms host an expanding range of user-generated content, their visibility is increasingly governed by complex networks of explicit and implicit constraints. This presentation comparatively analyzes regulation of user-generated visual content in China and the European Union.

In China, a comprehensive legal framework enforces proactive censorship. Laws like the Cybersecurity Law (2017), Data Security Law (2021), and Personal Information Protection Law (2021) are supported by long-standing administrative rules. Penalties for noncompliant platforms are largely administrative—ranging from warnings and mandated rectifications to license revocation—rather than financial. Notably, the recent Measures for the Administration of National Public Services for Online Identity Authentication (2025) link real-name authentication with content traceability, structurally embedding anticipatory self-censorship as users internalize surveillance.

In the EU, unlike China's domestically-contained digital environment, most major platforms are American-headquartered and operate under different cultural and legal norms. The EU enforces compliance primarily through financial penalties, using instruments like the GDPR, DSA, DMA, and the Terrorist Content Online Regulation, a pattern that exemplifies the so-called Brussels Effect. This prompts platforms to moderate more content, disable features, or limit access regionally. As a result, EU users may face a fragmented experience that echoes constraints in more controlled systems. Though grounded in rights protection, these frameworks often depend on automated enforcement and corporate discretion, reinforcing what critics call digital technofeudalism, which affects creators and suppresses nuanced content.

This comparison does not equate the two systems but shows how distinct political models create overlapping challenges. Users face the consequences. Their ability to express, access, and participate online is shaped by systems beyond their control. Centering their rights and voices is essential as we reshape global digital spaces.

Short Bio

Mo Li is a PhD candidate at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain. She holds degrees in Film Production, English Literature, Film Studies, European Studies, and an MBA from various international institutions. She previously worked for three years at the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO), gaining firsthand insight into EU regulatory practice. Born and raised in China, her research centers on freedom of expression, with a particular interest in underground cinema and digital governance. She self-finances her work to maintain full academic independence.

Kyoungsic Min: Regulatory Voids and Hollow Assessments: How South Korea's 2025 AI Act Abets Digital

This presentation critically analyzes two fundamental regulatory voids within South Korea's 2025 AI Act, a law passed under the banner of "industrial promotion." It argues that these structural flaws actively reinforce technofeudalism and enable new forms of digital authoritarianism. First, the presentation identifies the Act's most profound defect: the complete absence of a category for "prohibited AI." In stark contrast to the EU AI Act, which explicitly bans applications deemed an "unacceptable risk" such as social scoring or real-time biometric surveillance, the Korean law is silent. This legal void creates a dangerous loophole, allowing state and corporate actors to deploy potentially authoritarian technologies under a veneer of legality, thereby leaving fundamental rights critically exposed.

Second, the presentation contends that the regulatory mechanisms for "high-impact" AI are merely formalistic, lacking substantive enforcement. Critically, the crucial "impact assessment"—designed to evaluate an AI system's societal risks—is not mandatory and is instead left to corporate self-regulation. This delegation of core oversight to developers themselves fails to ensure accountability. Worse, it institutionally entrenches a technofeudal structure where dominant platforms are trusted to audit and approve their own power. In conclusion, through its structural failure to define prohibitions and enforce meaningful assessments, South Korea's AI Act sets a perilous precedent, eroding democratic controls and civil rights in the name of innovation. This cautionary case underscores that an effective response to digital authoritarianism requires more than just legislation; it demands legal frameworks with clear red lines and binding, non-negotiable safeguards.

Short bio

Kyoungsic is a Ph.D. candidate at Sungkyunkwan Law School and a dual-qualified attorney (South Korea; Washington, D.C.) specializing in AI governance, data privacy, and human rights. His professional background includes roles at the National Human Rights Commission of Korea, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and UNHCR. He currently chairs the IAPP KnowledgeNet in Seoul and serves on the Korean Bar Association's International Human Rights Committee. His research focuses on corporate accountability and bridging local and international frameworks for emerging technologies.

Section 5

Matteo Stocchetti: History, social order and cycles of oppression/emancipation. Critical reflections on technofeudalism

Although the idea that “history repeat itself” is popular, a distinctive trait of the social world is that “nothing happens twice in the same way”. The tension between these two competing claims inspired the following arguments about technofeudalism.

First, if technofeudalism is a concept describing a new version of an old social order and form of domination... one way to engage with the epistemic problem (How to know this phenomenon and, in a critical perspective, what is the knowledge needed to oppose it?) is perhaps to establish a parallel between the elements that influence the rise and fall of feudalism, with a special attention to the dynamics that eventually led to its decline through Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Second, if technofeudalism is a concept describing a fundamentally new form of social order & domination... the epistemic problem ... to look deeper in what is distinctive not only on the technological dimension, (e.g. the role of AI) but more broadly in other dimensions involved in the reproduction of this social order, most notably the epistemic dimension, education and ideology. The epistemic dimension includes the processes relating to the political economy of knowledge. Education is the dimension relating to the political economy of subjectivity or, more precisely, the processes in which the institutional formation of subjectivities occurs through the mediation of the communication of knowledge. By ideology, here I describe, following Althusser, the dimension relating to the representation of the imaginary relation of individuals to their real condition of existence (Althusser, 2008 (1971), p. 36)). Finally, while each perspective presents distinctive limitations, taken together they establish solid epistemic grounds for the critical engagement with the theory and practice of technofeudalism.

Short bio

Matteo Stocchetti is docent in political communication at Helsinki University and Åbo Akademi, Finland.

Freyja van den Boom: Narrative Capture and Legal Resilience: Unmasking Technofeudal Power in EU AI Governance

This presentation examines how corporate and institutional narratives shape, dilute, or delay transformative regulatory action within the European Union's AI governance regime. Drawing on a critical case study of the EU AI Act and the now-shelved AI Liability Directive proposal, I use Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) to interrogate how surface-level regulatory texts mask deeper systemic barriers to reform. This framework enables a dissection of technocratic imaginaries, legalistic rationales, and dominant innovation discourses that collectively contribute to what may be understood as a form of narrative capture an under-explored mechanism of corporate power and influence within EU digital policymaking.

By tracing how narratives around 'innovation-friendly regulation', 'human-centric AI', and 'riskbased governance' circulate across institutional and industry arenas, the presentation identifies how regulatory processes are subtly co-opted to align with market logic rather than public interest. This analysis not only reveals the fragility of democratic oversight in the face of lobbying power but also signals how digital authoritarian tendencies can emerge within ostensibly liberal-democratic regulatory systems.

The second aim of this presentation is generative: we explore how speculative design and participatory foresight can be leveraged to propose alternative visions and counter-narratives for EU AI governance. Drawing on recent work in speculative legal design and participatory AI futures, we present provocations that were developed to help the discourse on how to reinforce regulatory resilience against corporate capture. These include institutional redesigns, democratic oversight mechanisms, and narrative interventions to re-politicize the space of digital regulation. We will conclude by proposing for regulatory reform towards AI governance for truly democratic digital futures.

Short bio

Freyja van den Boom is a scholar and AI policy researcher with a transdisciplinary background. She holds a PhD in Philosophy from Bournemouth University, where her dissertation examined in-vehicle data access and telematics insurance regulation in Europe. She also earned degrees in Sociology of Law (Lund University), European and International Law (Tilburg University), Intellectual Property Law (Leiden University), and pursued advanced studies in ethics, gender,

media, and fine arts. Her current work explores hybrid AI governance, responsible data use, and anticipatory approaches to emerging technologies. She is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at CNRS @ Create in Singapore, focusing on comparative AI governance models in the EU and ASEAN, and at Leiden University's Quantum and Society programme, bridging technology, law, and artistic research. She is also affiliated with the Center for AI and Digital Policy (CAIDP) and Connected by Data (UK), and co-founded AIFutures, a speculative legal design and foresight lab. Previously, Freyja worked on European projects with KU Leuven and the Open Knowledge Foundation, contributing to GDPR, copyright reform, open data, and text and data mining policy. Her work combines academic research, policy design, and creative practice to shape inclusive, forward-looking governance of disruptive technologies.

Çağdaş Başar Bahar: Techno-Feudal Europe without Feudal Overlords

Developing and disseminating technologies are subject to the dual-use dilemma, as well as unintended consequences. Digital technologies – particularly AI, big data, and Web 3.0 – possess unprecedented potential for both positive and negative impacts, which are often interwoven. While these technologies may yield significant economic benefits, such gains often come at the expense of disrupting the political balance of power within societies. This is most evident in the US, where a techno-oligarchy has gained considerable influence, to the extent that it can shape political outcomes. Moreover, this techno-oligarchy has begun to interfere in European politics, both at the Union level and within member states. In response to this growing threat, the European Union has enacted regulatory measures such as the GDPR, DMA, DSA, and the AIA. However, these techno-legal texts cannot be disentangled from the political realities in which they are embedded. Accordingly, this presentation examines the aforementioned regulations in conjunction with political dynamics at the domestic, Union, and international levels. The aim is to uncover the underlying motivations driving the European Union's regulatory approach. To this end, the presentation adopts a critical realist meta-theoretical framework and employs retrodictive and abductive reasoning. Beyond legal texts, it also analyses speeches and statements made by both EU officials and members of the techno-oligarchy. The findings suggest that these regulatory instruments are at odds with the democratic values and principles of the Union. Rather than mitigating the societal harms of digital technologies, they appear primarily designed to subdue their politically oppressive potential. The presentation concludes that the European Union and its member states are steering toward a form of techno-feudalism, albeit one in which they refrain from cultivating their own techno-feudal "lords", in order to retain flexibility for a soft exit from the system amid evolving political, economic, and social conditions.

Short bio

Çağdaş Başar Bahar holds a BA in Political Science and International Relations from Yeditepe University and an MA in European Union Studies from Istanbul University. His master's thesis, titled "Democracy in the 21st Century: The Relationship Between Populism and Artificial Intelligence," explores the intersection of emerging technologies and contemporary political dynamics. He is the author of the book chapter "Can States Survive in the Artificial Intelligence Age?" His research interests include political theory, political economy, the politics of digitalization, international relations, climate change, and the green economy. He will continue aims to continue doctoral studies in upcoming semesters.

Section 6

Jasmin Hasanović: From the Land to the Data. Rethinking Sovereignty in the Age of Technofeudalism

The rise of technofeudalism as the new stage of capitalism (Varoufakis 2024) presents an unprecedented challenge in the post-digital age. As dominant tech corporations consolidate control over digital infrastructures – transforming data into a geopolitical resource – the intention is to offer a closer examination of the relationship between geopolitics and digital space. This relationship is most often understood in the context of the digital transformation of social relations – as a process of unlimited global networking and interconnectedness that relativizes and diminishes the importance of geographical space and the traditionally conceived borders of nation-states. However, nearly all aspects of social, economic, and private life are increasingly digitized and virtualized daily (Vatreš and Alispahić 2024). From data extraction to the race for advanced technologies and AGI dominance, these trends reflect a deeper shift in global power dynamics. Using a critical framework combining political science, digital studies, and political philosophy, this presentation examines how digital sovereignty is being reshaped. It conceptualizes data territories as contested geopolitical spaces, where states and corporations compete for control, creating fragmented and overlapping claims to authority. The analysis highlights how Big Tech's data extraction practices and platform dominance enable a new form of digital colonialism, exacerbating global inequalities by monopolizing profits and resources (Dachwitz and Hilbig 2025). The presentation also examines how AI-driven governance and algorithmic repression contribute to the weaponization of digital tools for surveillance and control, thereby undermining democratic institutions and civil liberties. Through a comparative analysis of the EU, U.S., and China's approaches to digital sovereignty, the presentation argues that achieving meaningful digital sovereignty requires not only regulatory innovation but also a restructuring of global technological dependencies. While the EU acts as a normative leader in data regulation, its capacity to counter technofeudal concentration and assert meaningful geopolitical agency remains uncertain. The presentation concludes by proposing a new conceptual framework that reimagines digital infrastructure as a contested political space – one that must be democratized not merely through regulation, but as a communal resource supporting democratic life.

Short bio

Jasmin Hasanović is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo. He teaches Geopolitics, Foreign Policy Analysis, Contemporary Debates in International Relations, and Theories of Democracy and Human Rights. His research interests include social and political movements, geopolitics, cyberpolitics, and the remembrance of (post-)socialist and Yugoslav legacies. He is also engaged in critical political theory, particularly in exploring contemporary debates on democracy and the relationship between activism and the idea of emancipation in modern political thought. He serves as a Management Committee Member of the COST Action "RELINK – Regaining Linkage? Digital Technologies Improving Civic Engagement, Political Organisations and Democracy" from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Simona Veleva: Freedom of the Media in the Age of Platforms: Media Regulation in the Context of the Interplay Between the European Media Freedom Act and the Digital Services Act

In the recent decades, freedom of the press and the way people exercise their right to freedom of expression drastically changed. The media environment is primarily dominated by platforms, which shape narratives and disseminate most of the globally reached content. In this sense, the European Union is trying to navigate the new realities through different legal tools while preserving media freedom and journalistic content on one hand and making platforms more transparent and accountable on the other. The presentation examines the interplay between the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) and the Digital Services Act (DSA). This analysis is made through the perspective of the digital constitutionalism. It focuses on the way their simultaneous application manages to address media freedom, editorial independence, and content visibility, including through media privilege, the role of the Digital Services Coordinators, and removal of illegal content. On one hand, the DSA includes horizontal obligations for digital platforms, mainly through emphasizing transparency, algorithmic accountability, and risk mitigation. On the other hand, the EMFA aims to establish protections for media actors, which are sector-specific and include safeguards against unjustified content removal and mechanisms to prevent states and platforms from interfering in the editorial operations. The current analysis explores practical aspects of the application of those two acts and their possible tension or the opposite—synergy in the sense of filling possible gaps and coordinating a synchronized legal framework, which is exercised by regulators and respective institutions. In this sense, those acts are a vital part of the

constitutionalization of the online public sphere and the role of media freedom's dimensions within platforms.

Short bio

Simona Veleva is a lawyer and a PhD in the field of Constitutional law. She is currently holding the position of Chair of the Council for electronic media – the Bulgarian media regulator. The focus of her work is the constitutional law, right to freedom of expression, human rights in the digital sphere, copyright, media law and ethics, data protection. She is an expert with the Digital Freedom Fund and the Centre for Freedom and Media. Simona teaches Media Law and Ethics, Human Rights in the Digital Sphere, Intellectual Property Law and Introduction to Constitutional Law, Judicial Systems at the American University in Bulgaria.

Julian A. Morgan: Platform Governmentality and the Limits of EU Digital Regulation: Epistemic Power in the Age of Technofeudalism

This presentation develops the lens of “platform governmentality” as a theoretical tool to examine the epistemic and discursive dimensions of “technofeudalism” within the European Union’s regulatory approach to “platform governance”. Building upon Foucault’s theory of governmentality, it argues that dominant “platform apparatuses” not only govern users and markets but also shape the discursive boundaries of technological regulation through socio-technical imaginaries, juridical discourse, and historical motifs. By doing so, platforms exert epistemic power that limits contestability and depoliticises governance under the guise of transparency, accountability, and procedural neutrality.³

Through a critical discourse analysis of recent EU policy instruments, including the DSA, DMA, GDPR, and initiatives under Europe’s Digital Future agenda, this contribution explores how regulatory frameworks often legitimise rather than limit the power of platform actors. Along with their lobbying efforts, platforms entrench narratives that normalise the epistemological horizons on which the legitimation of their apparatuses can unfold. This analysis considers the interplay between narratives in the legitimation and governmentalisation of platforms. How do historical discourses of corporate power, behavioural control, risk management, and State governmentality determine the genealogies on which legal frameworks “articulate” legitimate governance? It interrogates how these articulatory frameworks (re-)produce infrastructural asymmetries that align with extractive commercial imperatives and authoritarian forms of governance, effectively

marginalising alternative imaginaries of digital sovereignty, participatory governance, and algorithmic accountability.

By tracing the discursive antagonisms that shape platform governmentalisation in the EU context, the presentation argues that contesting technofeudalism and digital authoritarianism requires more than regulatory tweaks; it demands a fundamental rethinking of the epistemic premises that inform digital governance. Ultimately, the presentation offers a conceptual and methodological lens for analysing how power operates at the intersection of regulation, algorithmic infrastructures, and discursive strategies in the digital sphere.

Short bio

Julian A. Morgan is a PhD candidate and doctoral researcher at Humboldt University Berlin, German Research Foundation's DynamInt Research Centre (DynamInt), and an affiliate researcher at the University of Amsterdam's Institute for Information Law (IViR). He holds law degrees from the Universities of Zurich (UZH) and Amsterdam (UvA). Julian's research is focused on platform governance and platform regulation, with a special focus on the theoretical development of platform and AI policy studies and the (post-structuralist) critical analysis of regulatory and legal discourse in the EU.

Section 7

Iana Kazeeva: Democracy or Authoritarianism: Alarming Trends in European Digital Policy. The Case of Messaging Services.

The term “digital authoritarianism” usually refers to authoritarian regimes. However, trends towards authoritarian policies can also emerge in democracies. In fact, authoritarian policy measures represent a much higher danger in democracies than in recognized authoritarian regimes, as in the former case they are disguised behind democratic institutions and are less expected by the population. In recent years, the EU has passed a number of legal acts highly criticized by privacy and human rights advocates. Such legal acts of “dual” effect include the Digital Services Act, that could be used as a censorship tool according to civil society organizations, and the Artificial Intelligence Act, which includes the national security exemption that opens the door to violating citizens’ liberal rights and circumventing democratic processes. One of the most recent legislative initiatives endangering democracy is the ProtectEU – a new European Internal Security Strategy. Under the new strategy, law enforcement agencies would get lawful access to data by updating EU data retention rules and opening up encryption – a measure that is, according to privacy advocates’ warnings, “a slippery slope to a surveillance state.” Similarly warning trends are taking place at Member State level: France was close to passing the notorious “Narcotrafic” bill that would backdoor encryption in private messages, whereas Austria is considering enacting a messenger surveillance law. This presentation aims to analyze the alarming trends in Europe’s digital policy, in particular those aimed at broadening control over messaging services. The purpose of the research is to elaborate the legislative measures that would help find the balance between fulfilling the declared purposes of guaranteeing security for EU citizens and escaping the route of the EU turning towards digital authoritarianism.

Short bio

Iana Kazeeva is a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Innovation and Digitalisation in Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Vienna. She studied international commercial and tax law in Moscow and holds a Candidate of Sciences degree (Ph.D. equivalent) in international financial law. She has an LL.M. degree in European and International Business Law from the University of Vienna and completed the U.S. intellectual property law certificate program at Stanford University. Prior to joining academia, she worked at the legal department in the Mountain View office of a California-based media technology company, primarily engaged in reviewing and

negotiating technology and commercial contracts. She was also a senior legal counsel at the legal department of a global producer of mineral fertilizers based in Moscow, focusing on project finance and legal compliance. Her academic research interests include legal regulation of AI, intellectual property, and data protection law.

Roland Kelemen – Zsófia Réti – Dorina Bosits: The Evolution of Toxic Speech in Hungary: A Comparative Analysis Between the Socialist Era and the Post-2010 Social Media Age

The presentation examines the phenomenon of state-generated or state-supported toxic speech in Hungary within two markedly different political-social contexts. The aim is to explore how this type of communication manifested during the decades of socialism and the new forms and methods it has adopted in the post-2010 democratic regime, dominated by social media. During the socialist era, state-sponsored toxic speech was primarily asserted through centralized propaganda, censorship, and one-way communication. The party-state narrative demonized perceived or real enemies of the system (e.g., “class enemies,” “imperialist agents”), restricted freedom of information, and conveyed a monolithic, alternative-free reality through strictly controlled press, radio, and television. Its effects included fear-mongering, strengthening conformity, and suppressing critical thinking.

In contrast, in the post-2010 period, with the rise of social media, the methodology of toxic speech employed by state or state-affiliated actors has significantly transformed and diversified. Although direct censorship has been replaced by more sophisticated tools, the goals have remained partly similar: discrediting political opponents, polarizing society, running disinformation campaigns, and ensuring the uncritical acceptance of governmental narratives. A major role in this transformation was played by the emergence and explosive spread of social media platforms in our country, a key moment of which was the arrival of the still-dominant Facebook in Hungary in 2008. In its first two years, the number of users on this platform grew to nearly 1.5 million, and today, more than 7.11 million people have a profile on this site. Social media platforms provide opportunities for deploying fake profiles, troll armies, creating echo chambers and filter bubbles, and rapidly disseminating targeted messages. Its effects include the erosion of public trust, the deepening of social division, and the undermining of democratic discourse.

The research compares these two eras, examining the changes and continuities in the forms, tools, and perceived social impacts of toxic speech, with particular attention to the interplay between technological development and political culture.

Short bios

Roland Kelemen is the Program Director, Head of Department, Associate Professor at Széchenyi István University, Deák Ferenc Faculty of Law, Department of Modern Technology and Cybersecurity Law. He has taught at Széchenyi István University since 2015, joining the University of Public Service as a research fellow in 2017. He defended his dissertation in 2022 with summa cum laude. Since 2023 he has led the Cybersecurity Law specialization, and from 2024 he has served as Program Director of the Master's Program in Modern Technology and Cybersecurity and Head of Department. His research covers the history of military justice, exceptional powers, World War I press regulation, and the legal aspects of cyber defense. He was a Fulbright Scholar in the U.S. (2021–2022), a recipient of the Scholarship for the Nation's Young Talents (three times), and a postdoctoral fellow of the New National Excellence Program (2023) and the University Research Scholarship Program (2024). His teaching has been recognized with the István Bakonyi Excellent Educator Award (2023) and Lecturer of the Year Award (2025).

Zsófia Réti began her BSc studies in 2017 in Judicial Administration at the Deák Ferenc Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of Széchenyi István University in Győr (Hungary) in 2020, where she obtained her degree in 2020. In the same year, she continued her studies at the institution in the undivided Master of Law program, from where she graduated summa cum laude in 2025. She was awarded the National Excellence Scholarship for Law Students by the Ministry of Justice of Hungary on several occasions and received the scholarship of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) for Scientific Student Conference Papers, first as a sole author and later as a co-author. She has placed 3rd in the Infocommunication Law Section of the Hungarian National Conference of Student Research Groups, once with an individual scientific essay on censorship of public figures on social media platforms, then as a co-author with an essay scrutinizing the hate speech regulation of Meta.

Dorina Bosits is a law student at Széchenyi István University, also having completed an exchange and research semester at Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz. She also holds a degree in International Finance and Accounting from the University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Her academic focus lies at the intersection of constitutional and financial law, with research interests including digitalization, data protection, freedom of speech, and space law. She has received several academic honors, including the National Higher Education Scholarship and the "Student of the Year 2023" award. Dorina is a member of ELSA Győr and the Mathias Corvinus Collegium Law School and was part of the Széchenyi Moot Court Team awarded third place in the Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court competition. She is also a Lead Columnist for the Constitutional Discourse blog.

Anthony Kelly: Regulating the monetisation of reactionary political speech in the European Union: An audience-centred approach

Social media influencers have had a transformative impact on the marketing of goods, services, and lifestyles by commodifying the engagement of their followers (Shtern et al., 2019). Increasingly, influencers also serve as political influencers supporting partisan viewpoints and alignments (Riedl et al., 2023). Political campaigns circumvent rules governing political advertising by paying influencers to convey messages, disguising links between influencers and establishment actors and facilitating ideological formations that are instrumental in the entrenchment of reactionary digital politics (Finlayson & Topinka, 2024). Ensuing regulatory interventions in Ireland and Europe more broadly feature a bias towards models that articulate the weakness of influencer audiences as consumers. Many applications of regulations on political influencers in the European context consequently focus on consumer protections, reflecting the dominant approach to social media influencers (De Gregorio & Goanta, 2022). Such framings risk presupposing the power of influencer media, conflicting with seminal scholarship on the active role that audiences play in contemporary media ecosystems (Livingstone, 2015). In contrast with models that conceptualise audiences as weak consumers, research demonstrates the boundaries between reactionary influencers and their audiences are, in practice, extremely blurry (Lewis, 2018). Taking this research into account, this presentation seeks to identify a path forward for more robust regulations of paid political speech within the European Union. It does so by situating the outcomes of a two-year study of the antagonistic practices of reactionary influencer audiences with respect to influencer regulations within the EU—and in Ireland specifically. The goal of this presentation is to demonstrate the viability and necessity of an audience-centred perspective in the articulation of influencer regulations, arguing that a nuanced account of the actual practices and perspectives of reactionary influencer audiences is essential if we are to ensure influencer regulations achieve their policy objectives in the context of an encroaching digital authoritarianism.

Short bio

Anthony Kelly is a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Information and Communication Studies at University College Dublin, Ireland. He holds a PhD in Media and Communications from the London School of Economics and Political Science. His current

research, funded by Taighde Éireann –Research Ireland, focuses on reactionary political influencers and the antagonistic practices of their social media audiences.

Section 8

Carmen Tamara Ungureanu: DGA, Data Altruism and Big Tech at a Crossroads?

The Data Governance Act (DGA) seeks to support the European Union (EU) data sovereignty while combating Big Tech. Data altruism is one approach. The moral disposition to engage in others' best interests without expecting compensation is known as altruism. According to the DGA, data altruism is the voluntary, non-profit sharing of personal and non-personal data for public benefit/good. Data sharing can be done through organizations promoting data altruism. These organizations are subject to restrictive and burdensome conditions, and there are no provisions regarding their funding. Fortunately, the DGA rules on data altruism are not mandatory. This means that altruism can be carried out through other entities, such data intermediaries, like social entrepreneurs.

Conscious and voluntary action by data subjects and data holders, as well as the presence of a framework established (data entities), are prerequisites for EU data altruism. Passive behavior is excluded. The alternative to EU data altruism is the business model employed by Big Tech. They act in a sneaky way, encouraging a passive attitude, or, in other words, involuntary and unconscious altruism, but much more effective. For instance, would it be considered data altruism to pay for a subscription to ChatGPT and then, by using the service, to provide free AI training data? Or would it be just a multiple payment in favor of a technofeudalist for the service received?

In the presentation we propose, we will attempt to elucidate the likelihood of the EU approach's success in comparison to the Big Tech model, which is manipulative but very comfortable for the data holder or data subject. Are they at a crossroads or EU is still far away?

Short bio

Carmen Tamara Ungureanu is a Professor of International Commercial Law and European Private International Law at the Faculty of Law of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Romania. She is a doctoral supervisor in International Commercial Law and the Director of the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Law. Carmen holds a PhD in Private International Law from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași. She joined the teaching staff of the Faculty of Law in 1994 and has completed all stages of her academic career at the same university. Carmen's work was published at prestigious national publishing houses and in national and international law journals. She was an expert in Romania's Commission, Working Group III UNCITRAL (2017 -2022) and a member of the UNIDROIT

Governing Council, Rome, Italy (2019-2023). Carmen is also a member of the European Association of Private International Law (EAPIL).

Zsuzsa Detrekői: The Russian disinformation campaign

The Russian disinformation campaign “Doppelganger” (2022–present) exemplifies how digital technologies empower authoritarianism by exploiting weaknesses in the European Union’s regulatory framework. Operated through Russian entities like the Social Design Agency, the campaign clones legitimate media domains and deploys AI-generated content to spread pro-Kremlin narratives undermining support for Ukraine, EU unity, and democratic institutions. Despite its exposure in 2022, Doppelganger persists due to systemic gaps in EU digital governance, including inconsistent enforcement of the Digital Services Act (DSA), fragmented cross-border cooperation, and limited accountability for platforms hosting malicious content.

The EU’s reactive approach has proven inadequate: domain seizures and sanctions against Russian front companies (e.g., Structura) occur only after prolonged harm, while platforms like Meta repeatedly fail to curb Doppelganger’s fake accounts and paid ads despite DSA obligations. Crucially, the campaign exploits EU infrastructure—using European domain registrars, servers, and software—to evade detection, highlighting regulatory blind spots in domain governance and intermediary liability. Weak enforcement mechanisms allow persistent impersonation of outlets like Le Monde and government websites, eroding public trust and manipulating electoral debates.

While recent investigations under the DSA signal progress, the EU’s reliance on post-hoc takedowns rather than proactive prevention reflects a broader failure to address asymmetric digital threats. Institutional fragmentation exacerbates these challenges, with uneven policy implementation across member states and delayed attribution capabilities enabling Doppelganger’s operational resilience. The campaign’s continued abuse of generative AI and geo-targeted disinformation underscores the urgent need for harmonized transparency standards, robust platform accountability measures, and agile regulatory responses to counter state-sponsored digital authoritarianism.

This presentation will argue that strengthening transparency and accountability is crucial for countering Doppelganger-like operations. Initiatives such as mandatory disclosure of political advertising, public reporting on platform moderation actions, third-party audits, and cross-platform data sharing can help expose and disrupt coordinated disinformation campaigns. Embedding these measures within a proactive, harmonized regulatory system will be essential for safeguarding democratic values and public trust in the digital age.

Short bio

Zsuzsa Detrekői is a TMT lawyer and a part-time academic. She was a consultant of OpenNet Initiative at Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University for several months in 2007 and 2008. Zsuzsa was the general counsel of major Hungarian online content provider origo.hu. She also provides legal support for the Association of Hungarian Content Providers. Her research area is online content and internet related regulations about what she wrote her thesis on and achieved PhD in 2016.

Amanda Morrison: Stripped Scrutiny. The Weaponization of New Tech Laws against Public Participation in the EU

Meritless lawsuits aimed at intimidating and silencing critical speech are known as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs). SLAPP suits are on the rise globally as media freedom is on the decline. The trends correspond with the rise of authoritarianism worldwide. The two are inextricably linked. Media is the first line of defense against autocratic forces. It is also the first target. A less-informed, demobilized population is more amenable to authoritarianism. In April 2024, the EU mobilized to address SLAPP suits at scale by passing the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive, which set a two-year clock for Member States to implement the framework into national laws.

But a new form of SLAPP on the rise. Recent laws addressing emergent threats in the digital age provide new strategies for powerful litigants to mount their SLAPP suits. Nascent laws addressing data privacy and misinformation present an opportunity—and necessity—for a close look at how they might entrench systems of power. This presentation will look at SLAPP suits that have exploited the GDPR and misinformation laws to better understand how the EU Directive can be implemented to prevent the abuse of new digital laws.

The legal analysis will be situated in political context. Poland and Hungary are apt for analysis because of their divergent paths on the autocratization scale. Poland is emerging from the grip of authoritarianism while Hungary is sliding deeper into it. Poland, once a hotbed for SLAPPs, is now a leader in the region countering them. In Hungary, SLAPP suits are no longer a substitute for a consolidated media empire but a compliment to it. The presentation will compare the inverse trajectories of media control in Hungary and Poland, focusing on new tech-based SLAPPs, and identify tools to defend democracy against the tide of digital authoritarianism.

Short bio

Amanda Morrison, from Helena, Montana, is pursuing a JD at Stanford Law School as a Knight-Hennessy Scholar. She graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University with a bachelor's degree in public policy and international relations and earned a master's degree in global affairs from Tsinghua University in Beijing as a Schwarzman Scholar. Her undergraduate thesis "Feminism Under Firewall: A Media-Based Analysis of Policy Power and Regime Response in China" won the top prize in the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. Before law school, she co-produced the Netflix series *Keep Sweet: Pray and Obey* and subsequently led development of new documentary and scripted projects at Oscar-winning production company Little Monster Films. Amanda has published articles in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *Foreign Policy*, and *The China Project*. At Stanford Law School, Amanda is a member editor of *Stanford Law Review* and is a fellow with the Neukom Center for the Rule of Law.