Safeguarding Freedom in the Digital World

Big Tech, Bots & the Future of Democracy

14 – 26 March 2021

Online Version

Abstract:

Would you prefer living in the 1970s or in 2020? The answer seems obvious: The world is better today than just 50 years ago. The main reasons for this are computers and the Internet. Just imagine the room you are sitting in right now *without* all the screens around you. Would you be able to tell the difference between 1970 and now? Well, not really. That is because digitalization has been the major driver of human progress and enabled us (amongst many other things) to connect with other people from all around the globe. And this is what we will do in the Online Seminar: Liberals nerds from all over the world will discuss the hot topics of our times—ranging from the market powers of big tech and the problem of disinformation to the future of democracy in the age of big data. Because besides all tech optimism, there is also a dark side to the story: Digitalization has given rise to new and powerful threats to democratic processes, human rights, and the rule of law. And the solutions to such challenges are far from obvious from a liberal perspective. Hence, it is on us to strike a balance between recognizing the positive disruptions of an Internet age and the concerns for its impact on inclusive liberal democracies. That is why participants will not only be stimulated by daily expert talks but also work in working groups and put together their findings and recommendations in mini-hackathons!

Daily Themes:

★ **Big Tech:** Take it or break it?
★ **Fake News:** Destabilizing our societies or simply overrated?
★ **The Future of Democracy:** Campaigning in the age of Cambridge Analytica
★ **Free Speech:** Should we deplatform trolls and cancel hate speech?

- ★ **Privacy:** Should we care who gets access to our data?
- ★ **When Government Goes Online:** Geopolitics, propaganda, and surveillance

Duration: 9 days, 6 full content days + 2 onboarding/logistics etc. + 1 final presentations

Logistics/Needs:
- Zoom *(for daily check-in, online lecturers and expert sessions)*
- Discord *(platform to connect)*
- YouTube Videos *(for task explanations and context)*
- Notion *(for resources and eLearning components)*
- Moodle *(for resources and eLearning components)*
- GSuite *(for cooperative group work)*
- Participants are expected to have smartphones or other cameras/recording devices

Example of Daily Work Flow:

Day 3   BIG TECH: TAKE IT OR BREAK IT?

Day 2
18.00 CET   Video Task #3 and #4 are posted

Task #3: *Individual Assignment*
How is the "Big Tech"-question relevant for *my* country?

Task #4: *Group Assignment*
Big Tech from a Liberal Perspective
⇒ Watch the following [YouTube Video](#) and compile a ranked list (according to their strength) of Pro/Con list of all arguments in favor and against breaking up big tech companies.

Working in Regional Groups:
- ❖ Latin America
- ❖ Africa and Mena
- ❖ Eastern Europe & Caucasus
- ❖ South and South East Asia

Day 3

14.30 CET   Daily Check-in, Open Questions, Ask-us-anything
(*easy way to start the day for Latin American pax*)

15.00 CET   Review of Task #3 and Task #4

16.00 CET   Expert Lecture: tbd
"Big Tech: Have become Zuckerberg, Dorsey and Co become too
powerful?"

17.00 CET   <mark>Daily Mini-Hackathon</mark>

17.30 CET   *End of Session*

18.00 CET   Instructions for Day 4, *posting of Video Tasks at 18:00 CET*

Participation Requirements:

Participants successfully qualify if they fulfill the following requirements:
- 80% of the Video Tasks fulfilled (8 out of 10)
- 80% of the Expert Sessions attended (4 out of 5)
- 70% of the Daily-Check-in Session attended (5 out of 7)

All successful participants will be awarded an official certificate by the International Academy for Leadership for completing this course and enter into the IAF Alumni network. Moreover all successful participants will be guaranteed an invitation to an IAF in-person Seminar in 2021 on a topic of their own choosing—as far as they are nominated by the respective project office.

Facilitators:

Sven Gerst

Sven Gerst is a PhD Student in Political Philosophy at the Department of Political Economy at King's College London His research mainly focuses on matters of global justice, democratic responsibility, and individual accountability. At King's College London, Sven also teaches courses on political and economic philosophy, environmental economics, meta-ethics, and contemporary issues in applied ethics. He holds a M.Sc. in Philosophy from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) as well as a M.Sc. in Management from the University of Mannheim. Previously, he also studied at Harvard University, St. Petersburg State University, and National Taiwan University.

Armin Reinartz

Armin Reinartz is the Project Director of FNF based in Hong Kong. Armin's interest and work focus on projects related to digital societies and freedom, as well as startups and how they push innovation and progress today's economies and societies. He also coordinates the foundations analytical work in the region, promoting exchange among partners of our global network both inside and outside the foundation. Armin holds a Master of Arts in Contemporary East Asian Studies from Duisburg-Essen University, Germany, and a Master of Public Policy from Peking University, China.

The Foundation:

We, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, promote individual liberty, free and open societies and free markets in Germany and throughout the world. To us freedom is the guiding principle in policy making. We believe that free and open societies are the only societies that allow human beings to decide for themselves what is best, to develop their full potential and to pursue their dreams. This is what we mean when we claim to value human dignity. And it is freedom that produces prosperity. Together with our counterparts – who all share a similar set of values – we support initiatives in Germany and abroad that serve to enhance respect for the rule of law, private property and human rights, that foster tolerance and that strengthen economic freedom rights and democracy.

The programmes of the Foundation's International Academy for Leadership (IAF) form an integral part of our international work and offer Liberals from all parts of the world opportunities to engage in dialogue, an exchange of ideas, networking and mutual cooperation. We aim to inspire.

Venue: Online

Language: English

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