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Invitation
to the 11th IRS International Lecture
on Society and Space

European Public Values in a Global Online Society

José van Dijck, Utrecht University, The Netherlands

Abstract

Online digital platforms, which are overwhelmingly American-based and operated, have penetrated every sector of American and Western-European societies, disrupting markets and labor relations, circumventing institutions, and transforming social and civic practices. Platforms steer users' behavior and social traffic that is increasingly data-driven and algorithmically organized. They are gradually infiltrating in, and clashing with, the institutional processes through which European democratic societies are organized. Platforms are neither neutral nor value-free constructs; the norms and values inscribed in their architectures may clash with the societal structures in which they are gradually embedded. So the emerging "platform society" involves an intense struggle between competing ideological systems and contesting societal actors – market, government and civil society – raising important questions like: Who is or should be responsible and accountable for anchoring public values in a platform society?

Public values include of course privacy, accuracy, safety, and security, but they also pertain to broader societal effects, such as fairness, accessibility, democratic control, and accountability. Public values and the common good are the very stakes in the struggle over the platformization of societies around the globe. This lecture concentrates on the position of European (private and public) interests vis-à-vis the interests of an American online ecosystem, driven by a handful of high-tech corporations (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) that have become global data mining companies. While fights over regulation play out at various local and national levels, they cannot be seen apart from the power clashes between global high-tech companies and (supra-)national governments. At the heart of the online media's industry's surge is the battle over information control: who owns the data generated by online social activities? Particularly in the European context, governments can be proactive in negotiating public values on behalf of citizens and consumers.

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Oliver Ibert



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Vita

José van Dijck is a distinguished university professor at the University of Utrecht (The Netherlands) and the president of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Van Dijck's academic discipline is media studies and her field of interests "digital society". She received her PhD from the University of California, San Diego (USA), in 1992. Her work covers a wide range of topics in media theory, media and communication technologies, social media, and digital culture. She is the author of six books, three co-edited volumes and approximately one hundred journal articles and book chapters.

Van Dijck's book *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford UP, 2013) was distributed worldwide and was recently translated into Spanish. She is currently working on a book with Thomas Poell and Martijn de Waal titled *The Platform Society. Public values in a connective world*; the Dutch version was published in November 2016 and the English book is due in 2018 with Oxford University Press.

We kindly ask all participants to register [here](#). Thank you very much.



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