

CALL FOR PAPERS

Workshop on

Privacy and Data Protection in Europe: Traditions, Practices, and Discourses

The so-called digital revolution poses major threats to our privacy, which is both a civil (or even human) right and an important democratic norm. Social media applications and big data innovations, while highly beneficial in many respects, affect the societal fabric of visibility and retreat, of rights, power, and legitimacy, often to the disadvantage of the citizen and/or consumer. Accordingly, data protection has become a contentious political issue. A transnational campaign for better data protection has emerged and gained support over recent years. Fundamental EU regulation is under way to create a harmonized European data protection regime. However, while the concomitant lobby battles in Brussels and the Snowden revelations have taught us a lot about economic and governmental interests in this new and complex area of the internet governance macrocosm, we know much less about the socio-political reality of privacy and data protection and how it varies across different countries, even within the European Union. Lacking such knowledge, the democratic legitimacy of the EU's efforts in internet governance and the chances and pitfalls for an international regulation in general are difficult to assess.

It is against this backdrop that we are planning an international workshop, in order to study the variety of privacy and data protection across Europe. In our theoretical framework, we assume on the one hand that privacy has pre-political roots and relevance, but that it also constitutes citizen-state and citizen-business relationships and is therefore an essentially political concept. On the other hand, we distinguish three levels on which conceptions of privacy manifest themselves, namely traditions, social practices and discourses (public or special). We expect privacy to vary considerably in these aspects across European countries. Thus, contributions should not deal primarily with (common) threats to privacy, but with questions that address socio-political differences in both fundamental conceptions of privacy and data protection regimes:

Traditions

- Which administrative, legal and moral traditions and political cultures are constitutive for national data protection regimes?
- What cultural factors or historical experiences affect political or legal regulation and practices of privacy and data protection?

Practices

- Which social practices with regard to privacy and publicity can be observed?
- Can practices be traced back to important turning points in history or to critical junctures (e.g. end of the soviet rule)?

- How have new governmental and economic activities in the digital age affected citizens'/users' attitudes towards data protection so far?

Discourses

- Which interpretive schemes appear in current debates about privacy and data protection?
- Which optimistic or pessimistic narratives are told in response to the digital challenges?
- Which traditions and practices are reflected, challenged or renegotiated in privacy discourses?

Authors are invited to submit papers that offer deep insights into the national socio-political backgrounds of privacy and data protection issues, covering any of the aspects mentioned above. The contributions should have a solid empirical foundation, but theoretical reflections are also welcome.

Further process: Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be submitted to Dr. Wolf J. Schünemann (wolf.schuenemann@ipw.uni-heidelberg.de) and Dr. Max-Otto Baumann (max.baumann@mill-institut.de) by April 12, 2015. Please indicate your institutional affiliation. Acceptance notifications will be sent until May 31, 2015. A two-day-workshop will take place in Heidelberg in late November 2015. After that, papers for an edited volume will be selected based on quality and coherence of the book. We hope to be able to provide travel grants for international participants.

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