

## Seminar 5

### The Politics of Technology in a Moving Framework: From Print to Digital Technologies (Teresa Numerico)

Thursday 8 June, 11.15-12.30



“Move fast, break things” was the motto of Facebook from its birth until 2014. We can use this aphorism as an index of the digital technology project. Digital platforms, AI applications such as automated decision-making tools, and generative AI with Large Language Models aim to change the rules of social and political interactions, while transforming radically how we live and work.

The constantly moving context in which legal regulations are defined and applied creates new spaces and raises questions about the type of rights and of politics that need to be developed in order to respond to a constantly changing scenario. This can be contrasted to the situation prevailing in relation to the emergence of print technologies, which slowly produced a change in legal regulation – e.g. the invention of the rules for defining authorship was a response to this technology, and the new rules brought with them new jurisdictional and regulatory concerns. Moreover, where print technologies and the printed page were seen as a stable, practical, universal and concrete way of representing content and their relationships with the phenomena to which they refer, the dynamics of digital representation cause instability of meaning, as representations constantly change shape, digital address or can be deleted from platform(s).

We thus stand on the verge of a change of the representation and presentation of phenomena which requires new ideas on how to regulate what is permitted and what is forbidden within the digital representation environment. This new regulation must be based on a new politics. There are two major possibilities for conceiving this new politics of digital regulation:

- A change in how we identify the relevant regulatory jurisdiction, which must be linked to the effects of digital representations and not to the infrastructures that make the systems operate. This would require minimal changes in the current regulatory authorities, but it raises questions about the enforcement practices.
- A change in the regulatory authorities in order to reflect a more radical politics and a new form of regulation, based on human and environmental values, that does not permit the evasion of regulation by tactics such as changes in headquarters or operating spaces.

If we fail to change politics and perspective, we risk entering a period of chaos in which the Leviathan of technological power, which is in constant motion and can act at distance without obeying any regulatory authorities, will destroy the rule of law under which we live in mature democracies. The current aim of AI tycoons is that they are constantly moving to another game governed by new unwritten rules. The neoliberal ideology they are following is a subtle form of anarchy. We need to deploy a new political imaginary of technology regulations.

## Readings

- Mireille Hildebrandt, *Law for Computer Scientists and Other Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)
- Yuk Hui, *Art and Cosmotechnics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021)
- Fiona Macmillan, *Intellectual and Cultural Property: Between Market and Community* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021)
- Teresa Numerico, ‘Politics and Epistemology of Big Data: A Critical Assessment’, in Don Berkich et al. (eds.), *On the Cognitive, Ethical, and Scientific Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence* (Cham: Springer, 2019), pp. 147-166
- Bernard Stiegler, *Automatic Society, Volume 1: The Future of Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016)
- Alain Supiot, *Homo Juridicus: On the Anthropological Function of the Law* (London: Verso, 2007)