

Resistance and Agency in the Digital Society: Beyond Literacy, Transparency, and Risk Assessment

CALL FOR PAPERS

LAW AND SOCIETY INITIATIVE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

15 December 2025

University of Lausanne

Switzerland

The use of social media platforms, algorithms, and AI systems is widely spread in our daily lives. They make life easier for some people, while adding new mediations, changing habits and introducing new challenges. They are attractive tools for governments and public administrations. In particular, they are perceived as tools to make the state more efficient, for example, for assisting law-making or beyond decision-making in areas such as police, justice, immigration, military defense, health, welfare, and education. Nonetheless, the advancement and ownership of digital technologies are mainly in the hands of a few global tech companies, whereas their development, deployment and use have adverse effects on individuals and specific groups (e.g., hate speech, cyberbullying, discrimination, loss of skills), on the environment (energy consumption, digital capitalism, ecocide), on democracy (misinformation, deepfakes) and on the relationship between state authorities and individuals (datafication, surveillance, digital divide). In this context, governments in liberal democracies have developed a set of legal and normative responses, ranging from developing data and AI literacy to transparency and risk assessment requirements. These responses are expected to empower citizens and prevent risk damage to individuals, the environment, and democracy. They also generally imply limited intervention by the state, which is confined to a supervisory role in the relationship between individuals and companies.

In this context, this conference intends to explore the following questions:

- What are the ontological assumptions underlying such technologies, and their legal and normative responses?
- How does the current regulatory setup respond to the need to protect individuals, the environment, and democracy in the context of digital transformation?
- What happens when public authorities design and use such technologies?

- What are the implications of this regulatory setup for social uses, government, democracy and the environment?
- How do these technologies and regulatory settings empower people differently? How do they contribute to the creation or exacerbation of inequalities?
- How does the regulatory setup limit, contribute or reshape the 'disciplinary power' of such technologies?
- How are digital technologies and their legal and normative responses implemented in different geographical and sectorial contexts by state or economic actors?
- What alternatives are developed by citizens, workers, minority groups, social movement organisations, or even politicians, and bureaucrats in such a regulatory setup?

The aim of the conference is to explore the limits of the contemporary set of legal and normative responses (literacy, transparency, and risk assessment) to digital issues from a socio-legal perspective and to critically engage with current and potential future alternatives. It will be an in-person event organised at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland, by the Law and Society Initiative (IDES) on **15 December 2025**. The IDES is an initiative supported by the University of Lausanne that aims to contribute to interdisciplinary research between law and the social sciences from a law and society perspective.

Early-career scholars in law, sociology, socio-legal studies, anthropology, political science, public administration, and STS working on digital governance and regulation issues are invited to submit original paper proposals. Interested candidates are invited to submit an abstract and, if selected, a fully developed paper. Papers must be unpublished - publication to an electronic database (e.g., SSRN) is not considered publication for the purposes of this call. Senior scholars will discuss selected papers at the conference. We welcome abstracts dealing with theoretical or empirical aspects related to transparency and accountability, risk assessment or literacy, including, but not limited to the following topics:

- AI transparency and accountability
- Data and AI (systemic) risk assessments
- Data and AI literacy
- Automation, intelligent agents, AI agents
- Datafication, self-determination
- Digital sovereignty, global capitalism, data colonialism
- Discrimination and surveillance
- Digital divide
- Freedom of expression, Hate speech, Deepfakes
- Environmental issues, ecocide
- Activism, hacktivism
- Bureaucratic resistance.

Proposals must include a title of the presentation, an abstract of up to 500 words, and a short curriculum vitae of the proposer (maximum 1000 words) in one PDF file. Proposals should be sent to ides@unil.ch by **20 June 2025**. Decisions about the proposals will be communicated on **15 July 2025**. Authors who will be selected are expected to send a conference paper of up to 8000 words by **1 December 2025**. Some limited travel assistance will be available for young scholars without access to funds. Please indicate if you have a clear need for such funding when submitting the proposal.

The Scientific Board: Dre Marie Alauzen (Université Paris Dauphine), Prof. Sofia Ranchordas (Tilburg University/Luiss University), Prof. Eléonore Lépinard (University of Lausanne), Prof. Martino Maggetti (University of Lausanne), Prof. Aurelia Tamò-Larrieux (University of Lausanne), Prof. Josef Philipp Trein (University of Lausanne), Dre Clarissa Valli-Buttow (University of Lausanne), Prof. Sophie Weerts (University of Lausanne).

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