

INACH Annual Conference 'Social media, helping or hindering democracy?'

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Agenda in detail

Day 1

Welcome by Julia Mozer and Philippe Schmidt

Julia Mozer works as Communication and Policy Officer at CEJI- a Jewish contribution to an inclusive Europe. In her role, she focuses primarily on hate speech, misinformation and related online harms, through engaging in policy discussion with social media companies, developing and delivering training on the topic and building partnerships with CSOs and other stakeholders in Europe.

Philippe Schmidt is managing partner of the law firm Schmidt Brunet Litzler, established more than 20 years ago. He is a graduate of Paris University School of Law, HEC and Columbia University School of Law. He is a member of the Paris Bar and has taught law for many years at the University of Paris. Today, he is chairman of INACH and both Vice President of LICRA in charge of Digital Affairs and one of the members of its legal committee. As one of LICRA's lawyers, Philippe Schmidt has been engaged in many litigations related to Racism and Anti-Semitism and specialized on the issue of hate on the Internet.



Keynote by Daniel Gayo-Avello - "Social media, democracy, democratization"

The keynote speech will directly address the theme of the conference: does social media help or hinder democracy, or is it just a tool that can be used by governments and companies for their own interests?

Daniel Gayo-Avello is an associate professor in the Department of Informatics at the University of Oviedo. His main area of interest is web mining with a focus on social media. That interest moved him to research political opinion as expressed in social media, producing a number of publications including the recently co-authored book "Retooling Politics: How Digital Media Are Shaping Democracy".



"Algorithms, bias and cultural context. Perspectives from Latin America" by Ariel Grosman
This presentation will address the lack of cultural context in the algorithms and moderation process on different platforms, and how that leads to the invisibilization of minorities and the cultural differences of the different regions. In addition to that, a few remarks will be made about algorithms and the possibility of racist bias.

Ariel Grosman graduated in Sociology from the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is an analyst at the "Observatorio Web", an observatory where different types of discrimination and measures are analyzed and where they work with governments and social media companies in order to make a safer virtual environment.

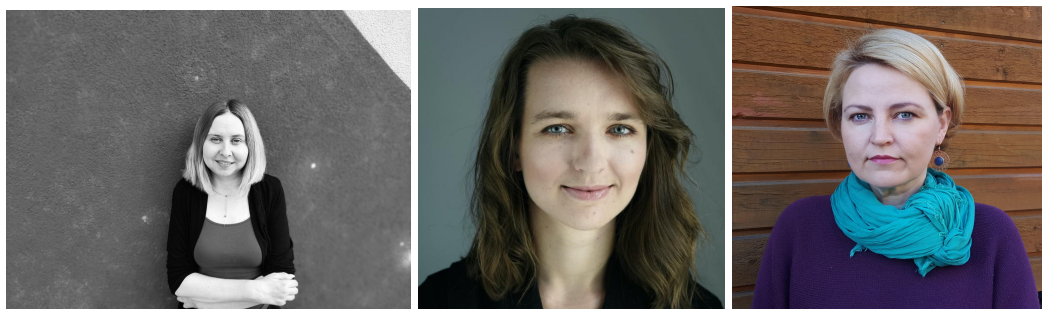


Breakout room 1 – "AI policy and in practice - concerns and opportunities" by Tina Dakovic and Patrycja Tempska, moderated by Kelly Grossthal
This session will take a closer look at new policies regarding AI and will give examples of where AI offers society opportunities to solve complicated issues as for example online hate speech.

Tina Đaković is a coordinator of Human Rights House Zagreb where she researches, monitors and advocates for human rights based policies, especially in the area of freedom of expression, digital rights and human rights education. Her focus on AI is related to policy developments in the areas of freedom of expression and hate speech, but also to privacy and security.

Patrycja Tempska is the head of the Interventions Team at Samurai Labs, an Artificial Intelligence Lab dedicated to detecting and preventing online violence. She conducts research and experiments in order to set the most effective strategies to reduce verbal aggression in online communities and foster constructive dialogue.

Kelly Grossthal is the head of strategic litigation at the Estonian Human Rights Centre, an independent non-governmental human rights advocacy organisation. She is also involved in different research projects that deal with freedom of expression and hate speech, equal treatment, privacy, and social media monitoring.



Breakout room 2 – “AI: Keeping the human in the loop” by Gijs van Beek & Sahana Udupa, moderated by Wendy Via

This session will include the difficulties of cultural contextualization in annotating extreme speech and the challenges facing AI assisted content moderation. The landscape of hate speech has a habit of evolving rapidly, which can render annotated resources outdated very quickly. In this talk, we will present ongoing work on deploying hate-speech detection systems in boots-on-the-ground initiatives, in which the AI works alongside humans to keep itself updated over time.

Gijs van Beek has been working in the field of online anti-discrimination and extremism for over 20 years. Gijs is co-founder of marokko.nl (a community website for urban youth, especially Moroccan Dutch young people) and co-founder of Textgain. He works with policy makers, ministries, universities, ngo’s and expert organizations throughout Europe. Most recently, he is coordinating, leading partner, Textgain’s new European research center on online hate, disinformation, and the development of ethical Artificial Intelligence (AI) for all

*EU language regions: the **European Observatory of Online Hate** (www.eoooh.eu). The initiative is supported by DG Justice of the European Commission.*

Sahana Udupa is professor of media anthropology at LMU Munich, Germany, where she leads two research projects on digital politics, online extreme speech and artificial intelligence funded by the European Research Council, and a multimedia project on online nationalism funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. She is currently a Joan Shorenstein Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School. She is the author of “Making News in Global India: News, Publics, Politics” (Cambridge University Press, 2015). Her latest publications include the United Nations research paper on [digital technology and extreme speech](#), policy brief on [artificial intelligence and the challenges of online content moderation](#), and the co-edited volume [Digital Hate: The Global Conjuncture of Extreme Speech](#) (2021, Indiana University Press).

Wendy is an expert in achieving social justice change and influencing narratives and actions around some of the most pressing civil and human rights issues of our time. Prior to co-founding the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE), she was the Chief Communications and Development Officer at the Southern Poverty Law Center, where she led numerous teams. She holds a BA in Humanities from Auburn University, Montgomery.



Breakout room 3 - “Algorithms and democracy - research and tech view point ” by Lucy Calladine and Dan Mercea, moderated by Victoria Carasava

This session will explore the tension between algorithms and democracy. How do social media platforms manage their algorithms and until what extent can, or should, these technologies be transparent and serve democracies?

Lucy Calladine is YouTube's Product Public Policy lead in EMEA. In this role, she advises YouTube on Product Policy implications including content issues relating to hate speech, terrorism and violent extremism. She also manages YouTube's work with GIFCT and other multilateral fora focused on fighting terrorism and hate speech in the online space. Prior to

joining Google at the beginning of 2020, Lucy was the Deputy Director for Online Policy in the UK Home Office leading the UK Government's policy response to terrorist use of the internet.

Dan Mercea is Reader in Media and Communication at City, University of London and associate editor of the journal Information, Communication & Society. He has a lasting interest in the implications flowing from the adoption and repurposing of Internet technologies in various domains of social and political activity. He has published widely in academic journals, is regularly interviewed as a subject expert and has been a contributor on popular science outlets such as the Washington Post's Monkey Cage. He is the author of 'Civic Participation in Contentious Politics: The Digital Foreshadowing of Protest' (2016, Palgrave Macmillan).

Victoria Carasava is a human rights activist working for Romanian NGO ActiveWatch. She holds an MA in International Political Economy and is interested in better understanding the intersection between precarity and different identities.



Day 2

Keynote by Tim Unwin - "Tough questions at the intersections between social media and democracy."

This "provocation" briefly explores difficult questions around relativism/universalism, rights/responsibilities, and the interests of neo-liberal democracy in the context of the development and use of social media. These are illustrated through practical explorations of digital technologies and sexual harassment, ways of reducing online violence against women, and experiences of trolling.

Tim Unwin is Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D and Emeritus Professor of Geography at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is author of Reclaiming Information and

Communication Technologies for Development (2017), a former Secretary General of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, and co-founder of TEQtogether.



“The new alternative social media platforms that often serve as a safe haven” by Yves Renuixen-Mencel and Alejandra Camjalli

With increased awareness of the harmful potential of extremist content online, mainstream social media companies have increasingly tightened and developed their content moderation policies, which has led a number of extremist users to seek refuge in more peripheral and less moderated online spaces. This presentation will explore the type of content present in and the impact of alternative social media platforms which often serve as a safe haven for extremism, and discuss key challenges posed by them with regards to combating extremism and hate speech online. Disclaimer: some people may find the content upsetting and disrupting.

Alejandra Camjalli is a Research Analyst at CST’s Open Source Intelligence Hub, focusing on researching far right antisemitism, extremism and terrorism. Alejandra’s research has focused on the extreme right usage of peripheral platforms and how that impacts modern day antisemitism online. Alejandra has also recently completed her MA at King’s College London, studying Terrorism, Security and Society, with a focus on the UK’s legal approach to combating UK based extreme-right terrorist organisations.

Yves Renuixen-Mencel FRSA is a Social Media Incidents and Policy Caseworker at CST. He combines a passion for social media with a deep knowledge of policy issues, antisemitism and what is happening on social media platforms. Yves completed his MSc at Brunel University in Business Intelligence and Social Media. In his work, he deals with policy issues regarding internet regulation and balancing hate speech on social media with freedom of expression.



“Ronald & Suzette award” by Mellouki Cadat

The award derives its name from Ronald Eissens (1963-2021) and Suzette Bronkhorst (1958-2021), it is awarded every year to (an) organization(s) and/ or (an) individual(s) that develop(s) innovative ways to combat cyber hate or works towards “Bringing the Online In line with Human Rights”.

Brieuc-Yves Cadat-Lampe MA (nickname Mellouki) (1958) studied law and political science in France and political science (c.l.). He is a former board member of INACH. He is a board member (secretary) of the Magenta Foundation. He has been involved in international networks and/or activities such as the French SOS-Racism, Hands Off My Buddy, Nederland Bekent Kleur/ Netherlands Shows the Color, the World Conference Against Racism/WCAR, and the European Network Against Racism/ENAR.



“The state of social media and disinformation in Africa. #ZimbabweanLivesMatter: Examining Protest and Disinformation Networks in Zimbabwe” by Jean Hubert Bondo and George Karekwaivanane

This session will focus upon the pros and cons of social media in Africa, freedom of expression and the contribution to democracy, as well as the devastating effects of hate speech and disinformation. It will take a closer look at a case study, namely Zimbabwe. In August 2020 the hashtag #ZimbabweanLivesMatter went viral on social media platforms. Zimbabweans and their allies, at home and across the world sought to bring global attention

to the spiraling crisis of misgovernance in the country. At its peak the hashtag was tweeted over 750 000 times a day. Significantly, it led to the activation of the government's own information operation apparatus as pro-government actors frantically sought to counter the messaging of the government's critics.

Jean Hubert Bondo is a journalist, blogger, researcher and founder of Africa Sans Haine. He is based in Mbuji-Mayi, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

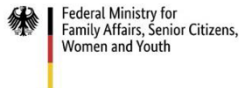
Dr George Hamandishe Karekwaivanane is a Lecturer in African Studies at the University of Edinburgh. His research focuses on the social and political impact of digital media in Africa with a special focus on Zimbabwe. He has published in digital publications and protest campaigns and his current work focuses on examining disinformation networks.



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