



The Struggle for Control over Communicative Spaces: Creating, Sustaining, Resisting as Tactics of Information Society Governance

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There is a struggle for control over Communicative Spaces across Europe, now, perhaps more pertinent and urgent than ever: it is the struggle of social actors, private entities and states, aiming to counter-act technological uses that result into unpredictable modes of behaviour. On the one hand, sometimes systematic, sometimes opportunistic approaches to curtail freedom to access and impart information are applied by state and state actors with the aim to ensure more control over digital communications and offline spaces. Particularly in our times of crisis, institutions and market actors have pursued the control over spaces of information and communication through regulation and/or through practice. Debates and public discourses about the 'Information Society' have entailed a preoccupation with the technological dimension of communication and connection among citizens but also between citizens and institutions. A contested term, IS has been approached right from the start as a near mythical dimension of powerful extremities: total liberation but also total destruction. What is important at this point is to unfold the ways in which the struggle over communicative spaces is pursued and explore the potential for re/democratisation re/decentralisation and emancipation in European societies. This struggle, this presentation argues, is part and parcel of the governance of communications broadly and of the information society particularly.

The paper will discuss the meaning and dimensions of 'Communicative Spaces' as spaces of on/offline continuity to explore the political aims and dimensions of their governance. In particular the paper will address the ways in which multiple crises on financial, political and institutional levels bring about a combination of power constellations and conflicts that give rise to the emergence of new political actors and force established ones to reconfigure their positions. The paper discusses resistance to attempts for control over media and assemblies, physical parliamentary and virtual, the aims to reconstitute free spaces for debate, contestation and protest as well as spaces for the development of new social practices. These social struggles are rooted in the increasing role of social movements and their interaction and use of technologies and the media. Not a separate, isolated or extraordinary case of struggle over spaces for expression, privacy and social connection, the process of shaping communication/s is inherent in the processes of governance of communications in general. The paper expands this notion through the concrete study of press coverage, civil society action and regulatory interventions.

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