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UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG
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DEPARTEMENT D'INFORMATIQUE
DEPARTEMENT FÜR INFORMATIK

INFORMATICS COLLOQUIUM

Speaker:

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Digital Society Opening Lecture: Infrastructures as Power in the Internet Governance Ecosystem

Abstract:
Internet governance can be understood as a normative « system of systems » in which more classical political tools such as legal instruments and parliamentary votes are combined with other instruments of power such as the market, the informal norms established by specific online communities, and technical design choices. This talk will provide an introduction to this ecosystem, with a specific attention paid to infrastructures as instruments of governance.

The first part of the talk will define Internet governance as the administration and design of the technologies that keep the Internet operational, and as the enactment of policy around these technologies. This governance is becoming one of the most pressing geopolitical issues of the contemporary era, linked to several public policy concerns such as personal privacy, economic stability, national security, freedom of expression, and digital equality; it involves high economic stakes and prominent media treatment of several «digital» controversies.

The second part of the talk will address how, within this plurality of co-existing norms governing the internet, arrangements of technical architecture and infrastructure are also arrangements of power and control (DeNardis & Musiani, 2016), a perspective explored by a sub-field of STS called infrastructure studies. Indeed, the design of the "plumbing" of the Internet (Musiani, 2012), underlying practices, uses and exchanges in a networked system, informs its adoption and (re)appropriation by users, its regulation, and its organizational forms. The example of decentralised architectures, understood by different actors as a possible «remedy» or alternative to the centralized monopolies of today's digital world, will illustrate the relevance of looking at architecture and infrastructure as arrangements of power and control.

In its third and final part, this talk will address the extent to which the «infrastructure studies» perspective is nowadays useful to examine under-explored facets of topics related to Internet governance, such as digital sovereignty, content moderation and digital labor.

Date and time:	*Tuesday September 26th, 2023, 5:15 pm*
Location:	*Pérolles 21, room A230, Bd de Pérolles 90, Fribourg*
Contact person:	*Prof. Denis Lalanne, Prof. David Bozzini, Dr. Anna Jobin*

The colloquium is free and open to the public.