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US economist Van Alstyne proposes warranties to combat misinformation

Boston University economist Professor Marshall Van Alstyne was one of the keynote speakers at the DPE Forum, a conference organised by the DFG Research Training Group 2720 "Digital Platform Ecosystems", which brought together renowned researchers from around the world to discuss the power of digital platforms at the University of Passau on 4 and 5 June.

According to Professor Marshall Van Alstyne, government intervention is not necessary to combat misinformation, deepfakes and propaganda. Instead, the Boston University economist proposed a self-regulatory solution in his keynote speech at the "DPE Forum", held at the Redoute in Passau, Germany. The market could clean itself up if it was corrected accordingly. "I believe this would actually be the superior solution and could create better platform ecosystems," said Van Alstyne.

So far, polarising news and hate speech on social media have been rewarded with reach, making them more valuable than less exciting facts. He compared the situation to pollution: The market doesn't work because the polluter doesn't have to pay the cost. There is now a certificate solution for CO₂ emissions. Something similar is conceivable for misinformation. This means that the person who spreads it has to pay. To illustrate that this could work, Van Alstyne showed several experimental studies that he and his team had conducted. The results showed that when people had to risk paying for expensive warranties to spread misinformation, they were more likely to choose a less exciting but true message.

While Professor Van Alstyne focused on the free market of ideas, Professor Martin Selmayr spoke about the possibilities of regulation. The academic director of the Centre for European Law at the University of Passau and currently a visiting professor at the University of Vienna gave a behind-the-scenes look at the negotiations on the General Data Protection Regulation that took place during his time as head of cabinet for former EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. The GDPR has set global standards. One reason for this is the marketplace principle in Article 3, according to which companies based outside Europe must also comply with these rules if they process the data of European citizens. This principle is also included in the AI Act adopted by the member states. According to Martin Selmayr, this also lays the foundation for a strong "Brussels effect".

About the event format "DPE Forum"

The two speakers were the keynote speakers at the "DPE Forum", an event organised for the first time by the Research Training Group 2720 "Digital Platform Ecosystems" at the University of Passau, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The aim was to create a platform for young researchers to exchange ideas with the big names in their field, explained the group's spokesperson, Passau Business Informatics Professor Jan Krämer. Professor Van Alstyne is something of a star in the field, as he is one of the founders of the platform economy theory, according to which platform companies will fundamentally change the way we do business and business models.

The power of digital platforms was the topic of the first edition of the "DPE Forum", which took place at the University of Passau on 4 and 5 June. Together with his deputy Professor Andreas König, Krämer invited all junior researchers, participating professors and guest researchers to the stage to underline the fact that the Passau group is the world's largest interdisciplinary research group on digital platforms. The group, which now comprises 17 researchers, is mainly based at the School of Business, Economics and Information Systems at the University of Passau. It examines the economics of platforms from a variety of perspectives: business informatics, business administration, economics and communication studies.

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URL zur Pressemitteilung: <https://youtu.be/MEWqDo1VxVU> Truth is Warranted: Addressing Misinformation in Information Markets – Keynote by Professor Marshall Van Alstyne

URL zur Pressemitteilung: <https://youtu.be/RBpgw1mYBdI> From the GDPR via the DSA and the DMA to the AI Act: Are There Coherent Regulatory Principles Behind the EU's Digital Acts? - Keynote by Professor Martin Selmayr

URL zur Pressemitteilung: <https://www.digital.uni-passau.de/en/beitraege/2024/dpe-forum-2024> report on the conference in the Digital Research Magazine



Professor Jan Krämer (left) and Professor Andreas König (right) with the keynote speakers Professor Marshall van Alstyne (2nd from left) and Professor Martin Selmayr (2nd from right) as well as Professor Jan Schumann (University of Passau, middle).

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