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Several scholars in STS (in platform and infrastructure studies, Plantin et al. 2018; see also in Internet studies, Dulong de Rosnay and Musiani 2020) have pointed to architectural features of profit-driven global digital infrastructures, e.g., GAFAM, that lead to concentrations of power, discrimination and inequalities.

Conversely, egalitarian applications such as on-line peer-to-peer production platforms tend to fail the test of scaling up small communities of participants to egalitarian dynamics in large groups, thus sometimes falling back into profit-driven, hierarchical, and discriminatory modes of operation (Tréguer et al. 2020).

The panel proposes to consider the problem of (in-)equalities and discrimination in information- (and possibly other resource-) sharing systems not as a consequence of system structure nor platform usage; rather, we encourage taking the opposite perspective: can inequalities be avoided from the outset. How can discrimination be hindered by the design of adequate architecture mechanisms for equality? What is the role of STS scholars in engaging with the design phase of systems?

The panel invites empirical contributions where equality is considered, negotiated, contested in a system's architecture as an initial design value. The user communities of these systems need not be large, nor their mode of function to be peer-to-peer. Contributions are invited to describe how the value of equality was designed in these projects and how it was to be integrated in, promoted by, or supported by the system's architecture.

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