

**UiO** : Department of Media and Communication  
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# Freedom? More than autonomy and why it is relational



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# Overview

1. Initial sources: *Introduction* (Floridi)  
technology  $\leftrightarrow$  sense of selfhood, identity  
+ *Manifesto*: (d) primacy of interactions, processes, networks  
*Shift from individual/atomistic*  $\rightarrow$  more *relational self*  
 $\rightarrow$  *relational autonomy*: freedom *through* relationships
2. (Individual-atomistic) autonomy + individual *privacy rights*  $\leftarrow$   
 $\rightarrow$  relational selfhood + “group privacy,” “third spaces,”  
etc.  
 $\rightarrow$  (virtue) ethics of “good lives,” “flourishing,” ...  
offline / online examples
3. Good lives in a digital era:  
Enhancing agency + relationality



d. the shift from the primacy of stand-alone things, properties, and binary relations, **to the primacy of interactions, processes and networks.**

**§ 4.2 We believe that it is time to affirm, in political terms, that our selves are both free and social.**

*Shift from individual/atomistic → more relational self  
→ relational autonomy: freedom through relationships*

## Relational autonomy

→ *relational autonomy*: freedom *through* relationships

*Contra* the “hyper-individualism” of classical liberalism,  
humans are **socially embedded**, [**beginning with  
*language***]

intimately related to **other people, groups,  
institutions, and histories**, ...

they experience themselves and their values as part  
of **ongoing narratives** and **long traditions**,  
and ...

they are motivated by interests and reasons that can  
only be **fully defined with reference to other  
people and things**. (Christman 2004, 144)

# Relational autonomy

→ *relational autonomy*: freedom *through* relationships

... the capacities needed for reflective [judgment and choice] must be developed during a relatively long period of dependence on parents and other caregivers. (Westlund 2009, 26)

Autonomy emerges *within* "... relations of **care**, **interdependence** and **mutual support** that define our lives" (Christman 2004, 143)

→ Arendt: **politics emerges from plurality** and ... **the public space (the space lying between us), where each of us can experience freedom.** (Background Document 2014, 42)

# Relational autonomy

## Paradigm shifts, (re)turns:

### Selfhood, identity

**Philosophy** ([Kant, Hegel] J. Rachels 1975; C. Gilligan 1982 ...)

**Social sciences** (G. Simmel 1910; E. Goffman 1959)

**Cybernetics /** (Plato, N. Wiener 1950)

→ **From [individual] “privacy” to private life** (*privatleben / privatlivet*) as constituted by our close *relationships* in our **intimate spheres** (*intimsfære*)

→ **Greater normative concern with “the good life,” contentment, “flourishing”**  
– i.e., the language / framework of *virtue ethics*

- › Start
- › Politik
- › Energie | Umwelt
- › Meinung
- › Impressum

## Meistgelesen

Grüne drängen auf  
Gesetz gegen  
Menschenhandel



Sie suchen ein persönliches  
Geschenk?

ANZEIGE



Es war ein aussichtsloser  
Kampf

Politik Inland

## Bericht: Regierungsstrategie "Gut leben" geht in entscheidende Phase

Veröffentlicht am 29. November 2014 von Andreas Heegt — Keine Kommentare ;

Die Umsetzung der Regierungsstrategie "Gut leben" geht kommende Woche in ihre entscheidende Phase. Bundeskanzlerin Angela Merkel (CDU) und Wirtschaftsminister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) haben für Mittwoch rund 50 Vertreter von Spitzenverbänden ins Kanzleramt eingeladen, berichtet die "Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung" (F.A.S.). Unter den Gästen seien Arbeitgeber, Gewerkschaften, Sozialverbände, Umweltinitiativen und andere Organisationen.

Sie sollen als Partner für rund 100 groß angelegte Bürgergespräche gewonnen werden, zu denen die Bundesregierung im kommenden Jahr einladen will. Das Kabinett hatte die Regierungsstrategie "Gut leben – Lebensqualität in Deutschland" zu Beginn des Jahres auf seiner Klausurtagung in Meseberg beschlossen. Die Gesprächsreihe soll laut F.A.S. im April beginnen, in der zweiten Jahreshälfte sollen Kanzlerin und Minister auch selbst bei den Veranstaltungen auftreten. Eine Auswertung soll im ersten Halbjahr 2016 vorliegen.

## digital era?)

es, law, and policy for more

questions of "moral  
ship and family  
f happiness, the role of  
and the questions of what  
sthouse 1999: 3; cf. Ess

"flourishing in a digital era"

→ governmental initiatives – e.g., Germany: "living well" (*Gut leben*) seeks to determine the personal priorities of German citizens → a catalog of criteria indexing quality of life.

## Relational autonomy online

Our assertion that we live in an age of information abundance

→ an age of dramatically enhanced relationships as instantiated in and constantly expanding through networked communication technologies...

We like to construct “third spaces” *between*

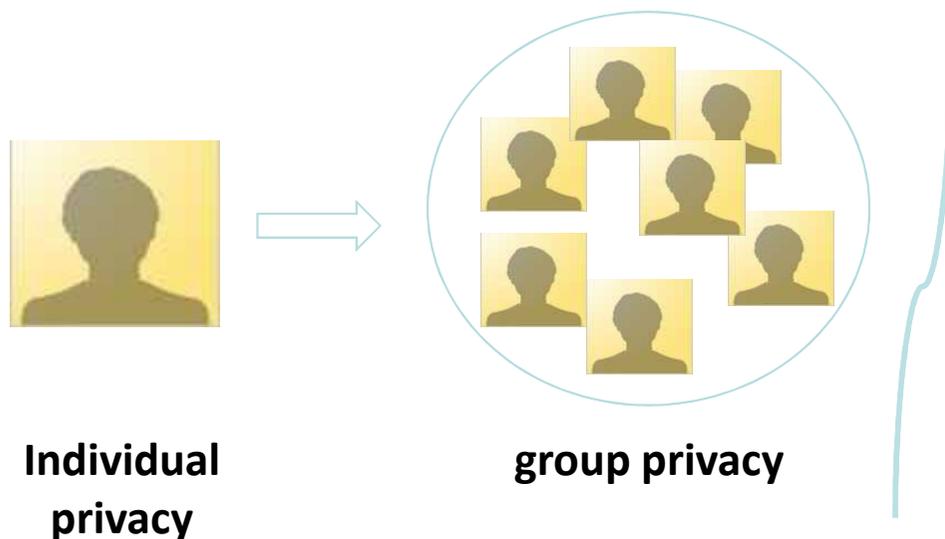
(atomistic) individual privacy

and *no* privacy in a public sphere (Bakardijeva 2009, Lomborg 2012)

→ H. Nissenbaum, *privacy as contextual integrity*

→ “group privacy” in Social Networking Sites ...

# Relational autonomy online



“publicly private” ↔ “privately public”

close friends, relatives -  
videos on YouTube  
“hidden” by tagging them  
so that only friends and  
relatives would know  
how to find them

relatively unknown  
“friends” - but still highly  
private / personal  
information re. identities,  
sexual orientation, but  
not, e.g., home address

(Patricia Lange (2007) in McKee & Porter 2009, 78)

# Hangouts

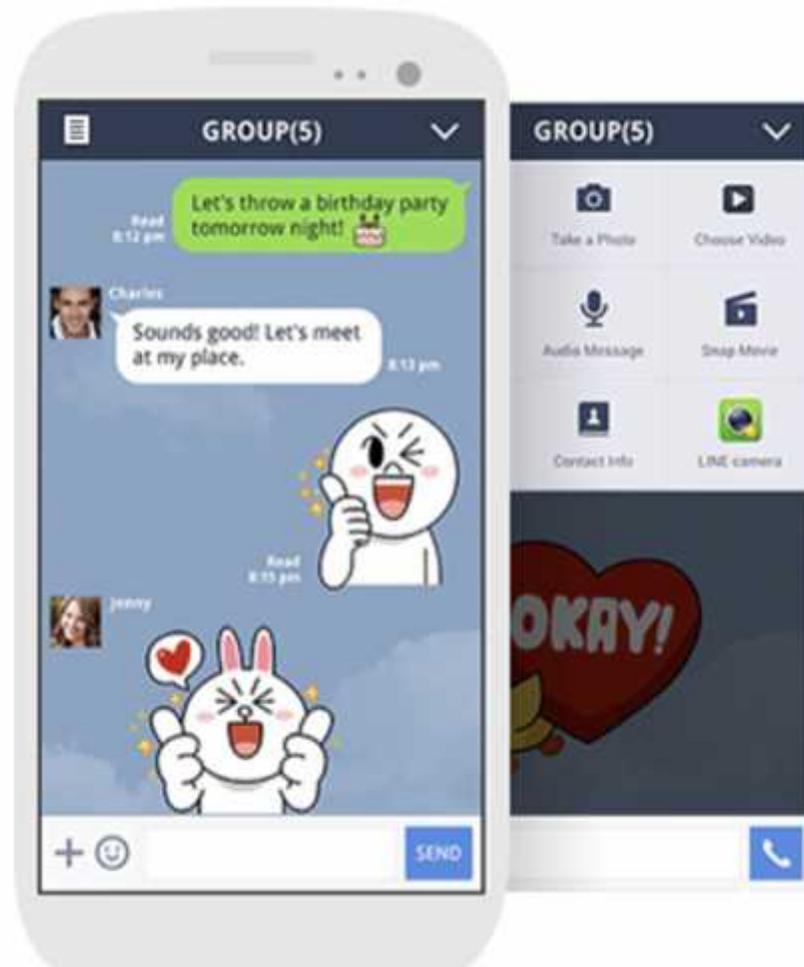
Hangouts

Bring your conversations to life with photos, emoji, and even group video calls for free.

▶ Watch video



Google hang-outs  
Snapchat ... LINE ... etc



### 3. Good lives in a digital era?

**“Privacy” becomes more complex –**

Nissenbaum, privacy as “contextual integrity” – where context is defined by the *relationships of the persons in focus*,

e.g., patient – physician vs. information source – information seller (for advertising purposes)

→ “privacy” now defined as a kind of “group privacy” or a specific *intimsfære*: the integrity of the information shared within this context is what must be protected – i.e., not allowed to “leak” beyond a given sphere of close relationships.

Difficult, yes – but can be done: Norwegian Research Ethics Guidelines 2006.

### 3. Good lives in a digital era?

More individual forms of agency / privacy remain possible (?)

Both offline / online – “good links” / good relationships are defined in part as those that enhance and expand our own capacities (virtues) as relational agents, social beings, including:

*communicative virtues* such as empathy, patience, perseverance, trust ...;

*professional virtues* – e.g., accuracy, sincerity, care in journalism (Couldry 2013, 25f.);

*citizens' virtues* – practices, habits of excellence required for flourishing engagement with democratic processes, including respect for Others as equals, social and communicative literacies, freedom of expression ...

= “**empowerment**”, contentment / happiness

**Many thanks for your attention!**

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## Relational autonomy

Cf. conception of “the mature human being” in the background language to the revised Article 100 of the Norwegian constitution regarding freedom of expression and freedom of the press:

This is **neither the collectivist concept** of the individual, which states that the individual is subordinate to the community, **nor the individualistic view**, which states that regard for the individual takes precedence over regard for the community.

The conception of “the mature human being” can be said to embody **a third standpoint that transcends the other two and assumes that a certain competence (socialization or education) is required in order to function as an autonomous individual in the open society.**

*(There Shall Be Freedom of Expression 2005, 18).*