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# "I plea for restoring freedom of thought and human connection, standing up for democratic values, reclaiming human control, and for safeguarding human dignity and sustainability."

**We have asked Rinie van Est, keynote speaker at the PI.lab-conference 'Autonomous Humans, Autonomous Technology', working at the Rathenau Institute, The Hague, to introduce his presentation.**

Information and communication technologies have transformed numerous social practices and thus our lives in many ways. In many instances they have enhanced our ability to inform ourselves, to make decisions, to communicate with each other, and to act in the world. At the same time it has become clear that the way these technologies are currently employed can also pose a threat to the autonomy of people. Being autonomous means being self-governing, determining one's own destiny, choosing one's own path, and deciding on the appropriate course of action in the here and now. There are two basic conditions for autonomy. First, a person needs the relevant capacities for self-governance. Second, a person needs a supportive environment. With regard to the latter, my talk focuses on the role of the socio-technological environment and, in particular, reflects on how intelligent machines and the Internet of Robotic Things currently challenge a diverse set of human capacities, both individual and collective, that are crucial for achieving human autonomy as well as maintaining a socially supported democratic system. The current internet has become a utopia for mass surveillance, psychological experimentation, automated human profiling and scoring, and industrialized persuasion or perception control. In addition, large parts of this system is controlled by states like China, and big tech companies. As a result, many important values and capacities have come under serious pressure, varying from privacy, attention, empathy, conversation and decent democratic debate. I will plea for restoring freedom of thought and human connection, standing up for democratic values, reclaiming human control, and for safeguarding human dignity and sustainability. Finally, I will give an overview of a number of proposals that have recently been made to address these challenges.

Registration for the conference:
Send an email to info@pilab.nl, indicating PIlab annual conference 2018.
Registration fee: €49,- (students, university members and workers at an NGO reduced fee: €25,-)