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Webinar of Computational Social Science Laboratory (CSSL@CUHK)

# The Impact of Regulation on Open Source Development: Evidence from Gitee

29 April 2025 (Tuesday), 11:00 - 12:30 (UTC+8, HKT)

### Abstract

Open-source software transcends national boundaries, enabling collaboration among developers in universities, companies, and governments worldwide and contributes significantly to global economic activity. However, governments are increasingly exerting regulatory control over this global public good. In this paper, we examine the impact of one of these efforts – censorship on Gitee, a China-based code collaboration platform intended as an alternative of the U.S.-based GitHub. Using data on millions of commits to public projects on Gitee, we analyze developers' responses to a major censorship event in 2022 that drew significant attention from the open-source community. Our findings reveal that censorship led to a steep decline in commits and interest in Gitee. However, this decline did not result in a substantial shift to GitHub, likely due to concurrent frictions on GitHub imposed by China's Great Firewall. These results highlight the tension between government control and the open-source ethos and suggest the complex effects of regulation on platform competition and participation in open source.



### Biography

Margaret Roberts is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego. She co-directs the China Data Lab at the 21st Century China Center and is an affiliate at the Institute for Global Conflict and Cooperation. Her research interests lie in the intersection of political methodology and digital politics. She received her PhD from Harvard in Government in 2014 and MS in Statistics from Stanford in 2009.

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