

Introduction

Platformisation as a systemic challenge

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ABSTRACT

This introductory chapter offers a brief overview of the macro-level effects of digitalisation and platformisation observed in recent decades by scholars. We note that the academic community and the public have assessed these impacts differently, with the former stressing negative outcomes and the latter framing innovations in communication technology as “progress”. Further, we suggest that recent distortions in the public sphere have attributed new connotations to old concepts such as free speech, media diversity, and participation. Finally, in search of strategies to safeguard and advance human rights, democratic institutions, and the ideal of the common good in contemporary digital societies, we introduce the three main sections of the volume, including the foundations and context, diversity, engagement and governance, as well as platform power and artificial intelligence.

KEYWORDS: artificial intelligence, digitalisation, information revolution, platformisation, public sphere

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Introduction

The digitalisation of communication technology has fundamentally transformed all areas of life, from the home via school to the workplace and from politics via entertainment to business. The societal impacts of digitalisation only compare to those of the industrial revolutions. Yet, unlike the revolutions of steam and of electricity, beginning in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, respectively, the revolution of information, starting in the late twentieth century, has taken place globally (Castells, 2009). And, unlike the industrial revolutions, the radical transformation of communication technology unfolded swiftly, within the lifespan of just one generation, making adaptation a challenge for many.

The impacts of digitalisation seem to fundamentally differ on the micro and the macro levels (Boldog, 2023). On the micro level, one may benefit from new communication technologies, as they can now more easily and cost-effectively access information, keep contact with family and friends, find a new job, attend an online class, complete a bank transaction, buy a used car, and so on. On the macro level, by contrast, the same person may be the loser of the ongoing transformation. The potentially adverse society-level effects of new communication technologies seem to be numerous and far-reaching, including a variety of overlapping and interdependent phenomena such as the computational dissemination of disinformation (Bradshaw et al., 2021), the emergence of digital hate speech (Vasist, 2024), the decline of traditional news organisations and professional journalism (Splichal & Dahlgren, 2016), the advent of populist politics (Castells, 2019), increasing political polarisation (Bail et al., 2018; Wojcieszak et al., 2021), and the surveillance of online communication (Ash, 2016), coupled, on the global level, with the high environmental costs of digital technology. Digitalisation has also enhanced and accelerated the blurring of the line between the public and the private spheres as well as the fragmentation of the public sphere (Habermas, 2023). Of course, innovations in communication technology have also had positive effects, such as easy access to a variety of information sources (Wojcieszak et al., 2021) and the opportunity for repressed groups to communicate their views to both in-group members and the world outside in authoritarian regimes (Steel, 2021; Štětka & Mihelj, 2024). In fact, the same innovation in communication technology may have both positive and negative impacts, depending on the perspective of the observer. The use of artificial intelligence, for example, may help traditional news organisations save costs while at the same time raises concerns of authenticity and ethics among readers (Ward, 2020).

In short, digitalisation is a significant driver of change due to the highly decentralising and hybrid nature of the technology involved (Chadwick, 2013), leading to genuine societal transformations. In recent years, the term platformisation has emerged as a standard term across various disciplines,

denoting the rise and global expansion of a few digital platform companies and the central role they play in how people access and use information (Nielsen & Fletcher, 2023), a process that involves institutional and business transformations as well as the reorganisation of social and cultural habits and imaginaries resulting from social media platforms' applications in various spheres of everyday life (Poell et al., 2019).

The implications of platformisation can be observed in at least two domains. First, it expands global reach, accelerates information accessibility, diversifies content and representation, and creates new channels for political expression. Second, the digitalisation of communication – together with platformisation – introduces new ways and forms of digitally mediated organisation of social life, which in turn transform institutional structures and routines. Social media platforms – also referred to as “social networks” – possess an inherent power to algorithmically elevate new authorities, foster the creation of spaces for marginalised groups, and politically mobilise the disadvantaged and the voiceless (Corsi, 2024; Haochen, 2023; Helberger et al., 2017; Van Dalen, 2023). These developments also challenge the normative foundations and values of contemporary societies, impacting the understanding of ideals, including those of truthfulness, the common good, social cohesion, responsibility, respectful communication, and accountable political expression, which are undermined by social media platforms whose curation processes lack transparency (Barnoy et al., 2025). Platformisation reshapes the public sphere by shifting agenda-setting, visibility, and accountability from democratic institutions to opaque, commercially governed digital information infrastructures – placing democracy in their shadows. Unsurprisingly, the decline of trust vested in the institutions of liberal democracy has coincided with the rise in manipulation, radicalism, populist politics, and polarisation, which have become some of the most defining features of contemporary societies (Schlesinger, 2024).

We live in an era of profound, overlapping, and far-reaching transformations – an emerging new reality – which raises several key questions:

- What changes have been brought about by the transformative nature of digital information technologies in general, and what did digitalisation change and who did platformisation empower in particular? Furthermore, what public values and institutional conditions were lost in the process?
- What kind of epistemic frameworks and forms of communication are needed to develop efficient policy strategies and ways of governance to sustain and promote cohabitation in this context of technological, social, and cultural change?
- What exactly do we mean by new reality and uncertain futures, and with which concepts shall we describe them?

Digital media: A shift in thinking is needed

To address these challenges, the chapters in this edited collection suggest developing a new understanding of responses, evolving communication practices and media management styles, and establishing governance rules in the digital public sphere. The contributors to this volume examine the emergence of digital media and social networks – popularly defined as platform-based services that enable users to share and exchange information with other individuals also using the network (Marique, 2021) – and their broader impacts among the many innovations in communication technology. There is also a special section with discussions of some other recent developments, including the advent and potential consequences of artificial intelligence – understood, according to one definition, as the attempt to make computers do the sorts of things that human and animal minds can do (see Frankish & Ramsey, 2014).

Although the benefits and drawbacks of platformisation have attracted sustained academic attention only in the past two decades, one may recall that the actual history of social media precursors (message boards and user forums of various kinds) goes further back in time. The first-ever “online community” emerged in the second part of the nineteenth century when, during the silent hours of night service, operators used the telegraph network (also known, retrospectively, as “the Victorian Internet”) for sharing stories, gossip, and jokes without ever meeting in person (Standage, 1998/2007). In the digital age, one of the first experimental dial-up bulletin boards was the Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link (abbreviated WELL), established in 1985 and allowing its few users to socialise, share photos, and express their thoughts while creating a virtual community (Kovarik, 2015). Certainly, these early “social media platforms” did not have any implications for the wider social environment, yet they were a sign of existing popular demand for such experiences.

Beginning around the turn of the millennium, the accelerating, irreversible, and open-ended trends of platformisation have affected nearly all forms of social organisation, including in both the private and the public spheres. In April 2024, Facebook, the largest platform, had over three billion monthly active users, followed by YouTube with two and a half billion and Instagram with two billion (Statista, 2024). The primary platforms owned by Meta alone – Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Oculus, Threads, and WhatsApp – had a total of 3.48 billion users in the second quarter of 2025 (MacroMicro, 2025). While the public, seeing only the micro-level impacts of the digitalisation of communication technologies, seems optimistic about platformisation and tends to frame it as “progress”, the academic community, preoccupied with macro-level developments, has turned increasingly pessimistic in recent years (e.g., Allcott et al., 2020). The general audiences seem to be largely unaware of the concerns of researchers and analysts. While some of the adverse effects of digitalisation and platformisation on the macro-level have been highlighted

by scholars in recent years, policymakers are still slow to react, lagging behind technological innovations and changing consumption habits.

Increasing scepticism within the academic community reflects a paradigm shift that is taking place in both normative media theory and public policy research, marked by the emergence of new connotations for some of the most frequently used terms, and leading to new research agendas.

Perhaps most importantly, *free speech* has been traditionally believed to be a prerequisite for democracy and has been held as a prominent media-policy objective. Yet, the abundance of fake news and hate speech on social media platforms challenges the traditional tenets of free speech theory. Contrary to expectations, the unmoderated and unfiltered “free marketplace of ideas” brought about by platformisation in most countries does not seem to foster mutual understanding but rather undermines democratic cohesion (Fukuyama, 2022). Abuses of free speech rights are widespread among populist politicians who eagerly disseminate disinformation in an effort to undermine democratic institutions and political stability as they like to fish in troubled waters – and can easily do so, as they can now bypass, via social media platforms, professional journalists who could ask questions on behalf of citizens and debunk lies. Other abuses of free speech rights such as online trolling, bullying, and character assassination may have a chilling effect and discourage people from voicing their views in public, thereby undermining, once again, democratic ideals.

In a similar vein, *citizens’ active participation in public deliberation* was long praised as a precondition for democracy and a prominent policy goal. Yet, as Judit Bayer (2019: 128) has observed,

social media allow everyone – without filters and mediation – to express their views in writing, pictures and videos [...] cyber-optimists indeed dreamt of a global participatory democracy without central governance [...]. The reality is sobering: there are many voices, but there is not one big audience [...]. The scope of attention is limited [...]. The voices that are already popular will be amplified, while others may vanish.

Considering all this, *media diversity* alone does not seem to improve the public’s chances of accessing the information necessary for rational decision-making on political matters but leads to an increasingly fragmented and dysfunctional public sphere. Too much noise and pluralism may harm democracy, as it may contribute to a post-truth world where people no longer share a common ground with the same agendas, experiences, and values, including democratic ideals. Certainly, the diversification of the media did not begin with digitalisation but other technological innovations such as FM radio in the 1950s and cable and satellite television in the 1970s and 1980s. Still, the proliferation of digital communication technologies, platforms, channels, and outlets in the 1990s and the new millennium accelerated the pace of change, and a result of this is that media to date play a centrifugal, rather than centripetal, role in society (Hodkinson, 2017). There are too many

outlets but too few professional journalists (Pew Research Center, 2021), as digitalisation has also undermined the business models of traditional news organisations, especially as social media platforms consume huge parts of the advertising pie without, however, providing content of their own. The pitfalls above are, of course, overlapping and interconnected.

Platformisation also challenges the ideal of *informed decision-making*. While there are numerous examples of people efficiently using platform-managed algorithmic communication to access information, the main concern is that individuals and groups must be equipped with skills to efficiently discern manipulations, radicalism, and polarisation in the digital sphere. As it turns out, in the face of accelerating information abundance, trusting institutions of epistemic vigilance – those of media, education, and the creative industries – is the most rational approach (Harambam, 2021; Szegőfi & Heintz, 2022).

What do we know about platformisation? Insights from scholarship

Summarising the impact of global digitalisation on political and cultural life in contemporary Europe is a challenging task. With this volume, developed by the Euromedia Research Group and published by Nordicom, we aim to identify some of the most concerning issues of digitalisation and platformisation in search of regulatory and self-regulatory responses to the challenges of public communication in order to sustain democracy in a rapidly changing information environment.

The goal of this book is not to find exact solutions or fixes for the social and political effects of digitalisation and platformisation. Instead, it serves as a guide to transformations that, in different ways, either reinforce or erode the core democratic principles – basic norms and values on which the democratic way of life is sustained. As already noted, these shifts are reshaping media practices, the organisational work of democratic institutions, and individual spheres alike.

The views presented here address the democratic implications of social media platforms from multiple perspectives. Some of these adopt a historical view aimed at revealing what digitalisation and information innovations have brought into people's everyday lives. Others take a more conceptual approach by examining the implications of technological impact on people's changed media repertoires and the emergence of new forms of media functionality, such as individual agenda-setting and interpersonal communication.

The questions this volume addresses are varied:

- What strategies can safeguard and advance human rights, democratic institutions, and the ideal of the common good in contemporary digital societies?

- How should we address the negative impacts of dysfunctional communication such as disinformation, hate speech, discourse toxicity, and radicalisation? What methods should be employed?
- Who should initiate proactive efforts to counteract prevailing power asymmetries in modern digital communications?

Regardless of the chosen path, the overall aim of this volume is to establish a new research and policymaking agenda that is informed not only by perspectives that follow risk awareness approaches. Instead, we aim to offer analyses of the observed characteristics of the digitalisation and platformisation phenomenon, and to argue for responses that are based on a good understanding of the issue, critically framed and guided by evidence.

Although the major social media platforms have business bases elsewhere, this book focuses on what is relevant for Europe and Europeans. The arguments are grounded in the theoretical lenses of the political economy of communication and other academic traditions that critically examine arising power asymmetries, inequalities, democratic governance, new forms of digital citizenship, and human rights. Another crucial aspect to consider here is the platformisation phenomenon's multifaceted nature. This complexity includes its technological and politico-economic aspects, along with the various conceptual definitions applied by scholars that relate to global information networks, digital media infrastructures, and social media platforms.

This book covers these topics in three broadly defined sections. We begin with democratic foundations and human rights, move on to digitalisation dynamics and challenges to public opinion formation, and then turn our attention to the specifics of artificial intelligence (AI) and the demands it places on governance and accountability.

We conclude the entire journey of this book with a chapter that situates diverse forms of platform power into a matrix that, by addressing this complexity, calls for a holistic approach to the interests of multiple actors – platforms, AI companies, the media, political parties and groups, citizens, and governments.

The first section – *Foundations and context* – comprises four chapters, setting the tone for analysis by applying a historical approach to the diffusion of innovations and concluding with chapters on governance choices geared towards informed and resilient civic engagement.

Tales Tomaz and Josef Trappel, in their chapter “From technologies of liberation to democracy-harming platforms – and why we need better communication structures”, establish the tone for the overall debate of the book by directly addressing the issues related to the business operations of global social media platforms. Their message is clear and straightforward: Focused efforts are required to discover noncommercial operational models if we wish to achieve the desired democratic outcome. Among the pressing current issues, they underscore information abundance, the influx of hate

speech and disinformation, the destruction of media businesses, and the emergence of a fragmented, divisive, and polarised public sphere. Their analysis concentrates on the discursive move from “technologies of liberation” to “democracy-harming platforms” and provides a normative perspective in the debate over the tension between the “moral panic” and the “limited effects” approaches. Tomaz and Trappel critically look at what is known about the influence of global digital platforms in general and of the consequences of the unexpected fragmentation and polarisation of societies in particular, questioning what is valid and what is overstated in these concerns.

In the next chapter, “The rise and fall of journalism”, Péter Bajomi-Lázár and Dalma Boldog take a historical perspective to reveal the nuances of societal transformations that go hand in hand with each innovative technological development. Their argument is based on the idea that technologically driven causality is far from linear; thus, a more subtle implications assessment is required. Relying on the tradition of differentiating between the primary, secondary, and tertiary impacts of emerging information and communication technologies, Bajomi-Lázár and Boldog use this framework to uncover societal outcomes by illustrating that none of the technological interventions are context-free and that all technology applications entail social and cultural consequences, while at the same time noting that innovations in communication technology also react to and mirror societal changes. They focus on the implications for journalism, examining it as both a profession and a discourse, and look at its transformation that results from the technological revolutions of the telegraph and the Internet. From a political implications perspective, they argue that digitalisation has led to the destabilisation of knowledge, associated with the deprofessionalisation of journalism and a gradual neglect of epistemic virtues. “Knowledge destabilisation”, it seems, is a conceptual state emblematic of contemporary societies, where uncertainty and lack of trust are dominant features.

In her chapter, “European approaches to disinformation and public discourse: The policy framework to regulate the digital platform environment”, Judit Bayer offers an overview of the recent regulatory efforts of the EU aimed at maintaining a diverse information environment and at fighting disinformation and hate speech with a focus on social media platforms or, as the Digital Services Act (DSA) calls them, “intermediaries”. She stresses that the DSA and related laws aim to create a regulatory framework that could support a more transparent and diverse information environment. Bayer notes, however, that European-level regulation faces several hindrances, owing in part to the limited powers of the EU vis-à-vis member states. Also, misinformation and disinformation are particularly difficult to regulate, as freedom of expression protects all statements regardless of their truth value as long as they do not violate other people’s rights. Furthermore, the EU cannot directly tackle content governance without interfering with the fundamental rights of platforms and their users. For these reasons, rather than focusing on human rights issues directly, the EU attempts to create an

information environment that fosters human rights and promotes democratic public discourse. For example, it calls for co-regulation and encourages the use of recommender systems – that is, algorithms that give prominence to authoritative information over disinformation. Bayer observes, however, that the enforceability of these policies is constrained. Moreover, with the current pace of technological development, policy and regulation often lag behind, as demonstrated by the recent emergence of AI technologies.

Tarlach McGonagle’s chapter, “Eternally vigilant: Protecting freedom of expression and media freedom in the age of digital platforms”, assesses why freedom of expression and media freedom are at risk – and perhaps more than ever – in platformised European societies. Recognising traditional threats such as political censorship, ideological and religious restrictions, and market-driven constraints, McGonagle examines the impact of transformed technology-driven communicative contexts on these fundamental freedoms. The platformisation of societies has taken the potential for communication restrictions to a new level based on private censorship, control of distribution of content, and market-based recommendation systems. Analysing the global and the European legal frameworks, McGonagle argues that the concretisation of these fundamental rights in different contexts requires a never-ending effort by legislative powers, media regulatory authorities, academics, civil society, and committed citizens.

The following four chapters in the second section – *Navigating diversity, engagement, and governance* – refer to matters of epistemic integrity. These chapters provide varied perspectives on how media organisations and the public navigate changing media environments and social media platforms, including ways to turn disruptions into new insights.

Jolan Urkens, Leen d’Haenens, and Jaron Harambam start by highlighting the problematic aspects of platformisation, explicitly addressing the fundamentally desirable trend of media diversification in their contribution, “Media diversity and the epistemic expectations of journalism: Public service media’s responses to alternative media and the challenge of democratic integrity”. They highlight the epistemic challenges that digitalisation poses to journalism and argue that current discussions on journalism’s epistemic challenges lack recognition of the inherently ambivalent commitments to the truth. There exists a tension between accurately presenting differing viewpoints (balance) and reporting factual information (objectivity). By constructing their argument around the various visions and functions of the relationship between democracy and media – namely the liberal, the deliberative, and the agonistic models, each advocating for a different balance between objectivity and fairness in media reporting – Urkens, d’Haenens, and Harambam conclude that there is no single solution for addressing the platformed threats to democracy and truth. The responses depend on the underlying vision of democracy and the epistemic role of the media.

The focus on public service media is sustained in the following chapter, “Public service media and entertainment: The challenge of engaging younger

audiences”, presented by Alessandro D’Arma, Andrea Esser, Matthew Hilborn, and Jeanette Steemers. In their analysis, the authors explore questions frequently addressed in policymaking, yet often from a traditional, so-called protectionist approach. Essentially, they investigate the experiences of young media users and their responses to entertaining content. For researchers, young media users represent an intriguing group of audiences, primarily due to their focused interest in social media content and engagement – behaviours and practices that frequently provide a new perspective on conventional outlets like public service media. In this contribution, D’Arma, Esser, Hilborn, and Steemers’s analysis of young audience preferences and search strategies provides clues about what is missing from public service entertainment and how entertainment can connect with public service values.

In their analysis “The role of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as sources of information about Europe”, Barbara Thomass, Andrea Miconi, and José Moreno examine social media repertoires and ask whether a European digital public sphere exists. Based on a comparative analysis of ten EU member states, the authors suggest that salient European issues such as public health, the economy, and the environment are rarely discussed by citizens on social media platforms. Even when raised, these issues are presented in national frames and used as leverage for internal political struggles. This suggests that the EU is not experienced by citizens in their daily lives, and Europe as such is primarily associated with the establishment. Europeanisation “from below” does not exist – at least not on social media platforms. Based on this evidence, Thomass, Miconi, and Moreno conclude that the platformisation process does not work in favour of Europeanisation, and that the early hopes about transnational social media platforms establishing a common “European public sphere” have not been fulfilled. Finally, they call for a permanent instrument to measure the concentration of social media platforms in order to counter the rise of information monopolies.

Auksė Balčytienė, in her chapter, “Engaging in civic dialogue or opinion battles? The epistemic risks informed approach to platform governance”, discusses the epistemic crisis brought about by disinformation, hate speech, and the resulting polarisation of European societies. She identifies three key vulnerabilities brought about by platformisation: the capture of citizens’ private data, the manipulation of public opinion, and growing public distrust in democratic institutions. In search of a holistic policy approach to foster society’s resilience, Balčytienė suggests that the reasons underlying the radicalisation of public discourse include, in addition to the digital transformation, various unresolved social issues and inequalities. In particular, she argues that meaning-making is affected by both individual capacities and sociocultural factors. Underprivileged groups such as migrants, minors, the poor, and the elderly are particularly prone to epistemic vulnerabilities. Additionally, based on the European Social Survey findings, she identifies significant variations across EU

member states in factors that shape societal resilience, including social trust, media freedom, and satisfaction with democracy, which suggests that the epistemic challenges European countries encounter also vary. It follows that the current epistemic crisis is a complex issue that the traditional media policy instruments, such as fostering public service journalism and media literacy education, cannot counter alone. Social inequalities must also be addressed in order to improve the resilience of the underprivileged.

The chapters in the third and last section of the volume – *Platform power and artificial intelligence* – provide insights into the disruptive nature of technological innovations, focusing on how these reshape and redistribute power dynamics.

In “Governing AI innovation under EU-style capitalism”, Robin Mansell takes a historical and holistic approach to the EU’s attempt to seek a world-leading position in the AI space through legislation aimed at securing innovation and market leadership as well as fundamental human rights. Mansell critiques this ambition, arguing that the prevailing imaginary of a technologically mediated future – shaping current EU governance approaches – conflicts with the ideal of governing for justice and the protection of human rights. Putting forward the EU contradictions and ambiguities, Mansell’s analysis highlights how the prevailing imaginary of technologically mediated progress works to normalise recourse to risk mitigation governance strategies that align “AI systems” principally with capitalist ambitions for profit, even as they champion the protection of human rights.

Helle Sjøvaag and Maximilian Eder, in their chapter “Ecosystemic AI: Local media systems and the challenge of artificial intelligence”, reveal that challenges brought about by innovations in media extend beyond technological infrastructures. Power arrangements arise from various imbalances implicit in the logic of new operations, creating the symbolic power of the networks and enabling them to plan and design societies and institutions around the digital infrastructure. How news media respond to these developments becomes a matter of growing concern. Sjøvaag and Eder study how structural conditions – such as ownership and geography, globalisation, digitalisation, algorithmisation, and platformisation – influence the news production process. They also look into the content-related conditions of journalism in the digital age, asking how datafication, algorithmisation, and metrics have impacted the news stories that professional journalists publicise. Furthermore, they examine the reception of the news, reflecting upon how audiences get acquainted with news stories and how they use the diversity of communication technologies.

The next chapter, “Competitiveness and artificial intelligence in the EU’s future strategy”, written by Hannu Nieminen and Maria Michalis, focuses on the latest EU high-level reports that aim to address the role of AI in promoting European competitiveness and upholding European values. They develop three main arguments. First, the analysed reports seem to endorse techno-solutionism,

with AI portrayed as the main driver for growth and competitiveness. This technological focus, however, is at odds with the EU's stated aim to strengthen European values, notably prosperity, equity, democracy, and environmental sustainability, all of which are paid lesser attention in the reports. Second, the reports compare and contrast the EU with the US and China, overlooking the rest of the world and the much more complex and interdependent global context. And third, the reports portray the EU as a single entity and disregard the internal dynamics and relations among its member states, particularly what the proposed strategies will mean for smaller member states.

In the section's final chapter – which also serves as the concluding analysis of the story told in this book – “Anatomy of platform power capitalism: Faces, forms, and regulation”, Werner A. Meier and Josef Trappel bring the power structures of digital super-platforms to the fore. They argue that, due to the extraordinary importance of super-platforms, they deserve a more comprehensive power analysis. Meier and Trappel aim to consistently foreground the multiple dimensions and faces of platform power, which are, in their perspective, in the process of institutionalising a new corporate power architecture. They aim to demonstrate that the super-platforms with new, scalable business models and network effects are the movers and shakers of our time, having successfully established the oligopolistic privatisation of social spaces. According to Meier and Trappel, super-platforms have, with their expansive business strategies, successfully exercised platform power control on the commercial Internet. Moreover, with their industrial digital platforms, the leading tech companies have not only institutionalised the creation and appropriation of value on their marketplaces, but they also dominate large parts of the state and society. Meier and Trappel are critical of the political and regulatory reaction to this obvious market failure and believe that, despite the institutionalisation of self-regulation, the identified economic and social power asymmetries are unlikely to change any time soon.

Responding to pressing problems

Although we critically assess digital platforms for their power asymmetries, the chapters also point toward opportunities for action. By examining policy frameworks that address outcomes of platformisation, such as the dominance of dysfunctional content, increasing polarisation, and fragmentation, we identify dimensions of a new reality that require concrete steps to safeguard core democratic values, including freedom of expression. We also argue that this moment can be used to shift mindsets by fostering a more accurately framed understanding of how digital platforms and AI operate (including the fact that digitalisation and AI are not “intelligence” in the human, conventional sense). Furthermore, we also propose guidelines for how democratic institutions, especially media and journalism, can become more

inclusive and better address vulnerabilities in digital public spheres at both the national and the European levels.

Taken together, the insights and observations presented in this volume highlight issues that warrant urgent attention for democratic governance in a platformised environment. Meeting the democratic challenges imposed by digitalisation, understanding the views of different actors (businesses, the media, citizens, and governments), finding workable responses, and rethinking our epistemologies require an analytical approach that balances the need for change and renewal with the sustainability of tradition and shared democratic values. For this purpose, various approaches combining regulatory instruments and educational interventions, and governance strategies and collaborative partnerships development between different stakeholders, must be further explored to foster the development of content, discourse types, linguistic forms, and binding and non-binding rules that are adjustable to the ideals and norms of resilient and accountable digital public spheres.

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