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DEMOCRACY IN A DIGITAL SOCIETY

Conference Report

Trust, Evidence and Public Discourse in a Changing Media Environment

Thursday, 24th of January, 9:30-17:00
Einstein-Saal, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences & Humanities, Berlin

About RE-IMAGINE EUROPA

Launched in 2018, Re-Imagine Europa is the first incubator for new political ideas to reinforce Europe's role as a global economic power in the 21st century able to safeguard a prosperous future of peace, freedom and social justice for all its citizens

Re-Imagine Europa was founded by President Giscard d'Estaing to honour his life-long friendship and collaboration with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and building on the spirit of pragmatism and solidarity that was foundational in the creation of the European project.

About ALLEA

ALLEA is the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, representing more than 50 academies from over 40 countries in Europe. Since its foundation in 1994, ALLEA represents its Member Academies on the European stage and seeks to promote science as a global public good.

Our activities aim at shaping the conditions for science and research, providing the best science advice available for citizens and policymakers, and strengthening the role of science in society. In the spirit of true collaboration and cooperation, ALLEA offers a platform for European academies to work together on topics of mutual interest and for the betterment of the inhabitants of Europe. Solving challenges in an ever more complex world requires comprehensive interdisciplinary and international cooperation from beginning to end.

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The battle for a renewed democracy and for a new European dream can only be won if we win the battle at the institutional, cultural and digital level.

Democracy lives in the minds of the people

PROFESSOR MANUEL CASTELLS

Europe is in danger. Democracy is in danger. Our value-system is in danger. The past ten years have been a watershed in the history of liberal democracies as we know them. Social movements have appeared on the global scene questioning the status-quo; The results of recent elections have defied traditional norms and behaviour; Evidence and facts seem to bear little meaning in public discourse where emotions run high and economic and political interests are played-out in an ever more aggressive fashion.

How do we understand the times we live in? How do we disentangle the complex web of causes and symptoms that lay before us? What institutions, regulations and norms can be developed to address the broader societal issues? How endangered is democracy in a digital society?

The arrival on the stage of history of digital technologies is cited more often then not as the cause of the biggest challenges we are facing today. As *writing* and then *printing* revolutionized the way societies communicated and organized in their time, so digital technologies are revolutionizing our time.

As Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve, Co-chair of the ALLEA Working Group on Truth, Trust and Expertise and former President of the British

Academy, reminded us: Socrates (as referred by Plato) thought that "the trouble is that writing is a technology that allows words to go fatherless into the world, nobody can see who speaks, nobody can see who the author is". Whilst it took two-thousand years to tame this new magical technology called writing, it only took two-hundred years to tame printing, resulting in the flourishing of the enlightenment, said Professor Antonio Loprieno, President of ALLEA. Today we are witnessing the third big revolution in communication technologies and a big question remains: how long will it take to tame these new technologies and how will they affect our society and institutional set-up? What structures and regulations can we put in place to ensure digital technologies develop in line with our values, therefore supporting the strengthening of our society?

These were some of the questions that the forum on "Democracy in a Digital Society - Trust, Evidence and Public Discourse in a Changing Media Environment" wanted to address. Re-Imagine Europa and ALL European Academies organised this conference together to build on the work developed by the ALLEA Working Group Truth, Trust and Expertise and act as the starting point for Re-Imagine Europa's task force on "Democracy in a Digital Society".

As President Giscard d'Esating expressed, "at Re-Imagine Europa we are convinced that we need to work together, bringing both experience and creativity to the table to develop innovative and new approaches to these challenges that will be defining our societies for the years to come".

"How do we define what the future of Europe in a digital era will look like? We want a digital future where core European values, such as freedom of expression, privacy, democracy or data protection are fully respected. We want an inclusive digital future where all our citizens will benefit from the digital transformation, where humans will continue to be at the centre of our action.

At the dawn of the European elections, it is also imperative to consolidate our efforts, and ensure that technology, and social media in particular, are not used to widely spread disinformation..."

MS MARIYA GABRIEL
European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society

Commissioner Mariya Gabriel highlighted the European Commission's commitment to address the digital challenges and to develop a European approach based on our common values. It is true that digitalization brings enormous challenges, but it also provides huge opportunities. In these times, it makes sense to remember who we are; to take pride in our European identity and values. Echoing the previous comments of President Giscard d'Estaing on the Greek agora, the Commissioner underlined that democracy is the approach we choose to manage all together the decisions that go beyond us and, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) said in his Theory of Political and General Will, "we still trust that implying all citizens in the making of the common decisions is a value".

She underlined the important initial work done by the European Commission these past years, from the creation of a *High-Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation*, to the publication of the *Code of Practice Against Disinformation* to deliver something concrete to citizens. (see Box 3 below for more information)

Today it is widely accepted that the digital revolution is affecting all aspects of our societies. But it is also a strategic tool for the empowerment of citizens; It will allow for a more horizontal organisation of society. So how can we assess these multi-faceted challenges? To answer these questions, the forum was divided into three main sections:

a) The first part of the forum aimed at addressing how we can understand the times we live in by recognising the deeper impacts of digital technologies on our society and democracy as a whole;
b) The second part aimed at addressing the impact of digital technologies on values and the issues of truth, trust and expertise;
c) The third part of the conference saw participants break-out into four groups to discuss more in detail specific questions related to the topic:

· **Citizen Engagement:** Digital Solutions in a Disenchanted Age and Empowering Citizens in the Digital Age
· **Disinformation:** The Role of the Media in the Digital Information Ecosystem and the Impact of Elections
· **Regulation:** The Ethics of Balancing the Internet and the Legal and Ethical implications of Data and AI
· **Narratives:** Defining the World and Trust in Governance, Science and Expertise

Considering recent events and the urgency to understand these complex relationships, renowned speakers from policy, academia, journalism and civil society addressed different aspects of political legitimation, societal trust, scientific evidence and public discourse in a rapidly changing media environment under the scientific leadership of Professor Manuel Castells.

Hosted at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the starting point of this rich and complex conversation was the central role played by the communication ecosystem in a well-functioning society and the acceptance that today's communication system is broken. Its influence in shaping minds - and thus reality - has been emphasised by its enormous impact on recent political events, underlining the fact that the control and ownership of the internet is one of the most important battles of our time.

> **These issues are intellectually interesting as they make us reflect on the philosophical, social and political foundations of our post-enlightenment Europe. They are also socio-economically relevant because – whatever the outcomes of this debate – they will contribute to shaping how, and in which world, we and the future generations will live. They are politically controversial in nature because we do not yet fully understand the logic underlying these transformations and their impact on our institutions.**

PROFESSOR ANTONIO LOPRIENO
President of ALLEA, the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities

In this paper we summarise the main outcomes of the debate and lay the foundation for the key questions that will form the back-bone of the "**Roadmap for a New Model of the Digital Information Ecosystem**" that Re-Imagine Europa will be developing over the coming months and that will be presented in 2020 to the new European Parliament and Commission. The aim is to build a new European model for the digital, including concrete actions of what should be done at a European level in the coming five years.

> **Academies should play a stronger role on these issues because they can provide the broad interdisciplinary knowledge-base and the expertise in order to analyse the issues that are arising and to arrive at recommendations for their solutions.**

PROFESSOR MARTIN GRÖTSCHEL
President of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities

BOX 1

Democracy in a Digital Society

[November 2018 – April 2020]

The work of Re-Imagine Europa is advanced through special Task Forces (TF) created to develop shared solutions that can respond to the most pressing strategic challenges facing Europe. In 2018, the TF on Democracy in a Digital Society was launched. As outlined in this report, the impact of digital technologies on society are far-reaching and understanding how to harness these technologies will be vital for the future.

Key Milestones

24 January 2019
Democracy in a Digital Society Conference
Berlin

25 June 2019
Outcomes of the Conference and Initial Round of Expert Committee Feedback published

Summer 2019
Start of engagement campaign for final version of the Roadmap and Report on Democracy in a Digital Society

Autumn 2019
Expert Committee Roundatable on key-issues

December 2019
Final Roadmap and Report Democracy in a Digital Society made available

January 2020
Meeting Steering Committee
Brussels

February 2020
Final Meeting Expert Committee to confirm report and develop next steps

April 2020
Final Roadmap and Report on Democracy in a Digital Society printed
[MILESTONE 6]

April 2020
Presentation of Report to key Stakeholders
Roadshow across European capitals

Key People

We would like to thank all our knowledge partners for their support in contricuting to the programme and content of the TF. A particular thank you goes out to all the people who are contributing with their time and expertise to the Expert Committee and to the Chair and Steering Committee of the task force as mentioned below:

CHAIR

PROFESSOR MANUEL CASTELLS

Manuel Castells is Professor of Sociology at the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) and Wallis Annenberg Chair Professor of Communication Technology and Society at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California. He is Professor Emeritus of Sociology, and Professor Emeritus of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley, where he taught for 24 years. He is a fellow of St. John's College, University of Cambridge. Professor Castells hold the chair of Network Society, Collège d'Études Mondiales, Paris. Mr. Castells has authored 26 books, including the trilogy "The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture", translated in 23 languages.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Elisabeth ARDAILLON-POIRER
Senior Policy Adviser of the European Political Strategy Centre of the European Commission

Anthony GOOCH
Director of Public Affairs & Communications at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Christophe LECLERCQ
Founder of EURACTIV media network & Chairman of Fondation EURACTIV

Joe LYNAM
Disinformation Specialist at the EU Commission former BBC Broadcaster

Maria Grazia MATTEI
Founder and President at MEET – Fondazione Cariplo

Paula PETERS
Vice President of Change.org

Alain STROWEL
Saint-Louis University (Brussels) and the UCLouvain (Belgium)

Krzysztof SZUBERT
Former Secretary of State / Deputy Minister of Digital Affairs, Poland. Visiting Fellow, University of Oxford, UK. Strategic Advisor of National Research Institute (NASK). Member of the Council of the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR).

BOX 2

ALLEA Working Group Truth, Trust and Expertise

At the core of European academies' priorities is the promotion of the values of science and research, as well as the benefits of including scientific reasoning in public discourse. To comprehend the challenges ahead in a wider context of major social, political and cultural transformations, ALLEA seeks to provide a transnational platform for perspectives on the nature of and relationship between truth, trust and expertise in the field of science.

ALLEA and its Member Academies therefore initiated the ALLEA Working Group Truth, Trust and Expertise to explore current and past dynamics of public trust in expertise and the contested norms of what constitutes truth, facts and evidence in scientific research and beyond. It developed a series of publications, workshops and conferences to reflect and build upon the available expertise and find new responses to uphold the principles and values of science in times of contested expertise.

Publications

Loss of Trust? Loss of Trustworthiness? Truth and Expertise Today,
ALLEA Discussion Paper #1

Trust Within Science: Dynamics and Norms of Knowledge Production,
ALLEA Discussion Paper #2

Trust in Science and Changing Landscapes of Communication,
ALLEA Discussion Paper #3

Members of the ALLEA Working Group Truth, Trust and Expertise

- Baroness Onora O'Neill (Co-Chair) – British Academy and Royal Society
- Ed Noort (Co-Chair) – Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Maria Baghramian – Royal Irish Academy
- José van Dijck- Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
- Luke Drury – Royal Irish Academy
- Göran Hermerén – Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities
- Gloria Origgi – Institut Jean Nicod
- Christiane Woopen – Center for Ethics, Rights, Economics, and Social Sciences of Health (CERES)

PART 1

EUROPE, DEMOCRACY AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

> In the digital society, the critical matter for liberty and democracy is not the ownership of means of production but the control of means of communication

PROFESSOR MANUEL CASTELLS

As the title of the forum suggests, there is an intimate link between political systems and the communication technologies of a society. The first part of the forum aimed to frame the broader questions underlining the impact of digital technologies on society and on our institutional set-up and why this is such an existential question. It also aimed to draw a clear parallel between these challenges and the current crisis of liberal democracy, with particular focus on the current crisis in Europe.

"Communication has always been central in defining the working of a society" President Giscard d'Estaing underlined in his opening address, then confirmed by Manuel Castells' statement that "throughout history, power relationships are largely based on the control of information and communication". When the internet was first launched, it was hailed as a beacon of democratization and the upheaval of hierarchical control over human communication; it was seen as a freedom-promoting tool created by freedom-lovers across the world. Today, the reality looks quite different from the original vision and, as stressed by O'Neill, we should be wary of the cyber-romantics, look at reality as it is today and think of Tim Berners Lee recent statement: "The web has failed instead of serving humanity".

Today we are forced to look at digital technologies with a pragmatic eye and realise that, as any technology, it is neither good nor bad. It provides great opportunities as well as challenges. Following a wave of cyber romanticism, we are today having our "Lord of the Flies Moment" realising that the internet, constituting 95% of global information, is the best mirror of us as society. And as we stare into the abyss of this mirror, we are not liking what we see: In addition to sharing of ideas, collaborative research projects and all the good things we hoped the internet would bring, we can also witness the worst sides of human nature: racism, bullying, hate speech, manipulation.

So, what is the link between digital technologies, the arrival of the challenges of fake news, polarization, virtual manipulation and robots and the current European crisis?

Democracy is the system of rules that aims at setting procedures of representation of citizens in the political institutions while protecting citizens against the abuse of power on the part of the state, as well as other sources of power, be it economic or cultural.

Today we live in a digital society where information and communication operate on the basis of digital technologies. Thus, the discussion on the threats to democracy, as well as on the promise of democracy, have to be placed in this digital context.

Today 95% of information is digitized. Compared with a global population of 7.6 billion people, there are 7 billion unique users connected to devices. Today we are all connected.

This however creates a paradoxical situation leading to an increasing control of information whilst we are seeing a decreasing monopoly of mass communication. In fact, it is precisely because we are decentralized, because there are multiple networks of communication where everybody

> **How endangered is democracy in a digital society?**

PRESIDENT VALÉRY GISCARD D'ESTAING
President of Re-Imagine Europa, former President of France

exchanges messages on everything, that we see centralized control of information. In this new ecosystem, three major sets of issues seem to be critical:

a) State Surveillance and the Limits to Liberty

Today the state – all states – have made surveillance of their own people (and of competing powers) the essence of their dominance. What is new is the reach and power of Big Data and the technological capacity to relate all this information.

These practices of mass surveillance are a fundamental threat to human rights and violate the right to privacy enshrined in European law.

b) Commercialization of Communication and the End of Privacy

Widespread surveillance is not the main source of the demise of privacy; it is not just "big brother" but "little sisters" – meaning all the companies that dispose of our information including insurance companies, financial companies, credit companies, internet communication companies, social networking companies, e-commerce companies and the like. We have effectively transformed our economy into Data Capitalism.

The feeling of vulnerability towards agencies and companies is increasing distrust. People will continue using their services, but it is important to note that this has become the fundamental public space of our age, the space where, in the last instance, democracy is fought over and decided.

c) The Struggle for the Public Mind

Power relationships are today played out on the internet and within the digital social networks. Digital technologies arrived on the stage with the hope of free expression and direct democracy, disintermediating the control of media by governments and corporations. Yet, free communication opens the way to dissemination of all opinions and ideas in society. The internet is a mirror of who we are.

At the same time, we are witnessing an increased use of new technologies to manipulate public opinion and spread disinformation. Bots are making it easier for a variety of actors to engineer virality and it has been asserted that AI and PSYCH-OPS are so effective they can influence whole elections (Cambridge Analytica). Psychological targeting works as an effective approach to digital mass persuasion, AI has also been called into question in profiling exhibiting racial and gender biases, deep fakes are getting more and more sophisticated raising a number of challenges for addressing the problem of fake news.

The result of the above is that the traditional deliberation process of democratic societies has become obsolete, amplifying the crisis of

> **The European construction and the European dream are in danger due to the lack of legitimacy of the European institutions in the minds of the citizens**

PROFESSOR MANUEL CASTELLS
Chairman of the Re-Imagine Europa Taskforce on Democracy in a Digital Society, Wallis Annenberg Chair Professor of Communication Technology and Society at the Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California

legitimacy.

What can be done? How can we "tame" digital technologies?

Today we are seeing a crisis of belief that is eroding trust in the democratic system, its institutions, the running of its economy and the moral base of society.

Anthony Gooch, Director of Public Affairs & Communications at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), started off the debate by underlining the challenges in terms of loss of trust that this crisis of belief has created and the need to rethink the way we communicate. Moving from a top-down communication ecosystem to a horizontal, open communication system requires organisations and institutions to radically change the way they communicate and engage people, in order to make it meaningful.

As with the arrival of writing and printing, so digital technologies will require us to rethink the way we organise our information ecosystem, the rules and regulations that secures rights and responsibilities and develop a system that can maximise the opportunities provided by these new technologies. As Professor Maria João Rodrigues, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-President of the S&D Group and President of FEPS - European Foundation of Progressive Studies underlined, we are dealing with a new reality, that will require us to re-imagine our way of doing things.

> **We have taken democracy for granted. Reality is that those things we have taken for granted are no more**

ANTHONY GOOCH
Director of Public Affairs & Communications at the Organisation for Economic Co-opera-

We need to work on developing a European way of working on these issues.

We cannot be naïve in our approach. To start understanding what can be done we need to examine who is in control today: big platforms that are usually not based in Europe. We need to build-up our democratic capacity to have a voice in the digital world.

The need for concreteness, as expressed by Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, was reiterated and a number of issues were underlined as necessary: more and better education; supporting quality journalism and content; use of new technologies in the fight against fake news; extending regulations and legislation; creation of a level playing field.

The issues raised will be dealt more in detail below, with special focus in the sections on Disinformation and Regulation, but it is clear that the European Commission will and should have a pivotal role to play in regulating the internet while being careful not to suppress internet freedom and other values. The European Commission is today seen as the most sophisticated regulatory body in the world and needs to play a key role in addressing the most pressing issues outlined above. Therefore "Democracy in a Digital society" should become a key priority for the next European mandate, as reiterated by President Giscard d'Estaing.

But this is not enough if we want to save our democratic systems. What we need to see happening is active participation at the heart

of the battle. We need more experiments of citizen participation through digital channels; we need to renew forms of political parties, renew public debates and dare to dream big in creating alternative spaces with different incentive structures that can address these issues. The impact of narratives and how to achieve meaningful citizen engagement will be discussed more at length below, in the groups dedicated to Citizen Engagement and Narratives.

What might a European Google look like? What would it be? Rodrigues pointed out the important work done at a European level on health and how this might point in the direction of what a European way for the digital might look like.

"The battle for renewed democracy can only be won if it is institutional, cultural and digital. This is part of Re-Imagine Europa and the reason why it is so important to start this process of deliberation" Castells concluded.

> **We need to redefine how our democratic institutions work in the 21st century**

PROFESSOR MARIA JOÃO RODRIGUES
Member of the European Parliament, Vice-President of the S&D Group and President of FEPS - European Foundation of Progressive Studies, Member of the Board of Re-Imagine Europa

PART 2

THE ROLE OF TRUTH, TRUST AND EXPERTISE FOR DEMOCRACY

> Once I was mine
> Now I am theirs

PROFESSOR CHRISTIANE WOOPEN

The afternoon debate was dedicated to exploring more in depth the implications of the paradigm shift of the communication ecosystem on the role of evidence, truth and trust in the public debate. The past decades have seen an increasing distrust towards authority be it in political leaders, the media and experts, culminating in the now infamous words of Michael Gove "Britain has had enough of experts". A trend mirrored in polls and surveys across the globe.

Truth, trust and expertise matter in every walk of life and play a pivotal role in any functioning society. In fact, ALL European Academies set-up a Working Group on "Truth, Trust and Expertise", chaired by Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve and Professor Ed Noort, aims to explore current and past dynamics of public trust in expertise and contested norms of what constitutes truth, facts and evidence in scientific research and beyond.

New technologies have repeatedly disrupted established cultures of communication.
It took about two-and-a-half centuries to get the cultures of copyright, the laws of defamation, the conceptions of intellectual property, that reconciled – to some extent – what was done by the arrival of printing.

BARONESS O'NEILL OF BENGARVE
Co-chair of the ALLEA Working Group Truth, Trust and Expertise and former President of the British Academy

Role of Values

Professor Christiane Woopen, Chair of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies and Executive Director of the Center for Ethics, Rights, Economics, and Social Sciences of Health (CERES) at the University of Cologne, underlined that what we are witnessing today is not an era of dwindling values, but a time when certain values, necessary for democratic societies, might be challenged.

This was in fact the topic of the Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights of the European Commission held in November 2018 – "Democracy in the EU" – with the aim to identify "avenues to foster free, open and healthy democratic participation in an era of growing low turn-out in elections, populism, digitization and threats to civil society".

Woopen reminded us that lamenting the moral fall of a society has been going on forever and inscriptions from the Sumerian times, five thousand years ago, testify to that. Yet, there is no proof of dwindling values. What is important is to understand whether and how values, that are crucial for a flourishing democratic society, can possibly be touched by what often is referred to as revolutionary or disruptive effects of data, algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI).

1.- The Value of Public Discourse in the Pluralistic Society

Freedom of opinion and speech are seen as obvious in western democratic societies. People are allowed their individual views and hierarchy of values which will be different from that of other people. So what is the function of public discourse where people have diverging visions? Conflict is inevitable.
Everyone has the right to stand-up for his

opinion and try to convince the other, ideally by argument and not by manipulation. In a democratic society, legal and social institutions have a key role to set frameworks and procedures for this debate and the media play a crucial role.

Yet today we do not have the self-standing pluralistic media landscape we knew before. As the 3rd working paper of the ALLEA Working Group states **"the social media world has come to epitomize a world where "opinion" is more profitable than "fact"**, where statements do better than logical argument and where polarization prevails over common ground and common sense".In a world where the main currency is clicks and likes, the main goal of most "communicators" is to reach as many clicks and likes as possible. The easiest way to do this is to "pick an online fight" to ensure that the message goes viral; the obvious consequence is an aggressive communication environment where each node is trying to pick fights with other nodes, resulting in increased polarisation and hatred online in a vicious circle that devalues scientific truth and correctness.

Anyone can send out an opinion without having to look the opponent in the eye or stand-up for their opinion. People might be driven emotionally, but rational arguments are indispensable to build a constructive debate, which is absolutely crucial and fundamental for a living democracy. What happens in online forums and on social networks is that a person radicalizes himself or herself as there is no counterpart or by the monotony of being surrounded by similar thinking (echo chamber). But how is this different from before?

Two key things:
- The scaling effect;
- The aggressive and difficult advertisement-driven business models

> **Democracy is not about consensus building, but about peaceful communication and finding solutions through compromise.**
> **What began promisingly as an opportunity for participation and social networking, harbours the danger of isolation in the masses and the radicalized struggle for position with regard to the political and social space. This, together with aggressive and difficult advertisement-driven business models ultimately means the dissolution of the media as the fourth power of the state.**

PROFESSOR CHRISTIANE WOOPEN
Chair of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies; Exec. Director of the Center for Ethics, Rights, Economics, and Social Sciences of Health (CERES), University of Cologne

2.- The Value of Privacy

Privacy – or the lack thereof in today's big-data world – is a constant topic of discussion when talking about the impact of digital technologies on society. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has done a lot to address this issue but it is not enough to protect privacy.

In the past, it was sufficient to restrict access to data to protect privacy. Nowadays we face a further paradigmatic development when having to relativize data scarcity and minimization in order to focus on the use of data. Instead of trying to restrict access to data – that most people are happy to give freely – we

should focus on what is allowed to be done with data. What is worrying is the algorithm-driven possibility to deeply intrude in the individuals personality, into his or her integrity. Michael Kosinski and his colleagues have proved that with very little data – that does not even have to be personal – one can use psychological persuasive communication that is very effective.[1]

> **The democratic systems that we have today – be it at national or European level – have changed too little to respond to technological change. But, at the same time, they have changed too much for the nature of man, that is much less plastic. Think of globalization, internationalization, etc. that question deep-seated instincts.**

PROFESSOR ŽIGA TURK
University of Ljubljana

We are today in a world of **algorithmic, individualized, psychological mass manipulation**, and this is a deep threat to democracy. This power to change/manipulate behaviour is against democracy and the problem cannot be solved by protection of personal data but by prohibition of such algorithms and micro-targeting (in fields to be defined) and in setting-up and reshaping the roles of who is responsible for what. Our current institutions are not enough.

3.- The Value of Human Dignity

This is the most fundamental value for all society and is rooted in a legal system that protects the freedom of individuals – who have dignity and not a price – and limits state power to interfere in the lives of its citizen. In a digital age, it is so important to limit surveillance and the appraisal that is based on it.

Think of the Chinese system of citizens appraisal currently being set-up through the collaboration of the state and big companies where an infraction in one area – say a parking fine - can lead to ramifications in all other areas of life.
European history has taught us repeatedly that people, given certain situations, can give up their freedoms for enhanced security and comfort. In the digital age, totalitarian systems come in the guise of service offers.

It is imperative to act forcibly now. Woopen stressed the importance of working now to set-up new institutions and foster a system based on our values to ensure that we hold on to those freedoms and rights that our forefathers have fought so hard for.
Opening the debate, O'Neill underlined three characteristics that prefigured the current crises:

[1] *As remarked by computer scientist Piero Molino, "data access to researchers is certainly an issue. At the same time, companies that nowadays are the self-proclaimed keepers of such data are not held accountable to security standards (the situation just slightly improved after GDPR, but everyday there is a new report of millions of accounts' information being exposed by those companies), so the current situation of having economically driven actors being the gatekeepers of people's information is certainly suboptimal. On the one hand, research in sensitive fields like cybersecurity has so far shown how security by obfuscation rarely works, on the other hand, there are one million possible ways in which total freedom of access to people's data can be used to damage them. For this reason, more than specific technological solutions, societies and governments should come up with principles that inspire policies, and then evaluate the application of those policies against the guiding principles to make sure those are not betrayed by the implementation or there are no clearly exploitable loopholes to circumvent the principles."[SMART Expert interviews, 2019].*

a) The conflation of the idea that there is a culture for handling information with the fantasy that there is a culture for communication.

Communication does not ignore the recipient whilst many forms of information dissemination do ignore the recipient.

b) The conflation of the notion of freedom of speech with that of freedom of expression.
We give primacy to the speaker and ignore the recipient.

c) Culture of control
This new communication landscape enables new powers to control communication allowing tech-companies deep influence on politics, on economics and on individual attitudes.
A very vivid discussion followed, chaired by Professor Ed Noort, Co-Chair of the ALLEA Working Group Truth, Trust and Expertise and with the participation of Lambert van Nistelrooij, Member of the European Parliament and Member of the European Internet Forum, and Professor Žiga Turk for the University of Ljubljana.

Diverging opinions came to the fore but there were several areas of agreement:

1.- The potential danger and vulnerability of our democratic systems faced with this new setting – in particular in relation to the number of "external actors" using these new technologies to manipulate audiences for the benefit of third parties

2- The importance of the media and of looking at the existing business models deserves a particular mention. Our current system does not "value" facts and evidence but runs on a currency based on "attention" influencing the whole structure and priority of public discourse.
3- The need to start using existing tools – such as anti-trust legislation and competition law – to increase transparency of on-line advertising (Ad Tech).

4- Existing institutions as well as politicians

have not yet started to suing digital tools in a meaningful way.

If they are to build a stronger relationship with the citizen, they need to start using these tools for real engagement and participation as opposed to just for dissemination and PR purposes.

Political actors are not using these new technologies enough. We are not engaging citizens enough. We need to change the way we relate to citizens and this will enable meaningful interaction between the political system and the public. If we do not fill this space, it will be– as is – occupied but other actors.

LAMBERT VAN NISTELROOIJ
Member of the European Parliament and Member of the European Internet Forum

PART 3

FOCUS GROUPS

In the afternoon we had the opportunity to break-out into smaller groups to discuss four sub-topics implicated in the broader questions. Each discussion was kick-started by impulse statements by key participants. The groups were asked to come-up a few suggestions of what they would recommend in the short-term to address these broader questions. Below we report an overview of the very rich discussions and the key points brought forward by each group.

Digital Solutions in a Disenchanted Age and Empowering Citizens in the Digital Age

The communication tools and structures available to society have always played a key role in how societies organise, mobilise and construct their reality. Digital technologies therefore provide an enormous opportunity for citizen engagement and horizontal collaboration. This session, chaired by **MEP Brando Benifei** explored the challenges and opportunities as well as possible steps to be implemented at a European level in order to ensure that meaningful networks and contributions can be mobilised in the future. The impact of digital technologies on society, both in creating social movements as well as relating citizens to new patterns of communication was also discussed. Social networks have a strong effect on political agency and can be both a tool of empowerment as well as manipulation, as recent events have shown. What can concrete examples from across Europe teach us about these issues?

Anthony Gooch, Director of Public Affairs & Communications at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), opened up the discussion by underlining the need for institutions to radically change approach both in methodology and content when it comes to citizen engagement. Reiterating points made during the morning conversation, Gooch underlined the need for institutions to focus more on the emotional side of issues as opposed to the rational part, as this is much more important in shaping opinion. The gilets jaunes movement, for instance, was brought-up as an interesting example, something unprecedented in our digital society and more similar to social aggregation of the 1970s (or to 1980s hooliganism, he threw in as a joke). The movement started from simple tummy needs in the part of the population most affected by the 2000s crisis. When measuring material well-being, things get personal very quickly, underlining the need for objective data to be crossed with individual, subjective feelings and needs in order to obtain a detailed scenario of people's real priorities, and the latter needs to be taken

into consideration while implementing the welfare of citizens. Gooch concluded that technology can bring many improvements, even coming from unexpected points of view: we should not be dogmatic in any approach, remaining open to new solutions without throwing away what is good in more traditional forms of delegation of administrative power.

Elisabeth Ardaillon-Poirier, Senior Policy Adviser, European Political Strategy Centre of the EC spoke about the important priority of putting people in first place and exhibiting every single voice matters. She mentioned among several initiatives the Citizen's Dialogues: every EU Commissioner was mandated to be politically active in the debate with citizens.
In February 2018 the target of 1000 "open" dialogues was reached and now there are more than 1600. The European Commission has focused on reaching out on different ways: setting an online panel and managing an online consultation and also partnering with all other Institutions and Member States that wanted to take part in order to strengthen the debate on the future of EU. As commendable it is, most participants seemed to comment about the fact that much more needs to be done.

Maria Grazia Mattei, Founder and President at MEET | Fondazione Cariplo, the Italian Centre for Digital Culture, presented to the audience some of the efforts that were made by Fondazione Cariplo, mainly through the branch she founded and presides, to develop research on the potential of new media in developing citizens' empowerment. On this path MEET | Fondazione Cariplo has launched the Citizen Data Lab, which investigates if and how big data and technology can be useful for citizens and the sectors in which they can be co-actors of this process. As most of the citizens clearly feel much more is to be expected from EU. It's urgent to refocus on the narrative of digital as a tool for society and stop endorsing a technocratic vision: the present technological leap can be also seen as the tail of the cultural revolution that began in the 1960s.

> **Digital is not a technology, but the new "genetic code" of reality which triggers the way people live and interact. What citizens need is not only a technology literacy, but an urgent dissemination of digital culture.**

MARIA GRAZIA MATTEI
Founder and President at MEET | Fondazione Cariplo, the Italian Centre for Digital Culture

While representative democracy has to remain the pillar of the Union and of the single member states, every viable solution that brings citizens closer to the institutions and their representatives is surely welcome.

Arnau Monterde, associate professor at the Open University of Catalunya, presented an important project he developed, in collaboration with professor Manuel Castells, for the municipality of Barcelona. During the five years from 2013-18, according to Forbes the most publicly traded companies shifted from traditional companies (such as BP, Exxon-Mobil) to new media and technology (Facebook, Google, etc.): in such a rapidly changing scenario it's hard to avoid risks that are difficult to predict as those posed by fake news and disinformation exploitation. Democracy is strictly related to rights as well as to strikes and conflicts, so if we are to improve democracy in Europe we must understand it and

bring the new technologies to the center of our equation.

There's no dichotomy between direct and representative democracy, Monterde underlined; the problem is the absence of measures to integrate these two resources. With a few exceptions, no government has so far done anything of impact to fit the requests of those who ask for direct involvement in administrative decisions of representative systems. What was done for the citizens of Barcelona is a platform designed to be employed, copied and modified by everyone, using an open source model to ensure that citizens' money that was used for development was properly valorized in a publicly useful way.

The project has led to the development of a community built around it through the integration of contemporary online and offline participation from citizens. The project, which has now been freely adopted in many different context all around the world (Mexico City is a bold example), demonstrates there's room to build public alternatives to private new media companies. This is most important to guarantee the objectivity and independence that in different contexts, which are interested in profits and business development, can't obviously be claimed.

Monterde's conclusion is that, apart from the crucial integration of representative democracy and direct democracy, anti-trust and competition authorities should be rapidly implemented also for new media companies as they are for traditional businesses. Scientists and government administrators will obviously learn how to communicate better and over time narration will develop on new bases, which will be built in a way comparable to those of the web 2.0 media environment.

Since time for the session was running out, few comments were made with a focus on how to deal with an urgent problem, the management of which requires immediate responses, while new narratives and approaches take time to develop. Most of participants agreed that, as a short-term action, it's better to use basic elements which are already known and thus acceptable to anyone than to start reinventing standards of democracy, focusing on acting over a broader perspective only after dealing with immediate problems.

Key takeaways:

- Time is an essential feature in developing a sustainable citizen engagement approach and testing and experimentation will be necessary to develop a working model. To be able to do so successfully there needs to be a substantial increase in investment on these types of digital infrastructure;

- Ensure that "citizen engagement remains a key priority in Europe and is reflected across the legislative and regulatory framework;

- Support attitude change within institutions to move from old way of top-down communication to a more "emotive" and engaging horizontal dialogue.

The Role of the Media in the Digital Information Ecosystem and the Impact on Elections

Recent events underline the urgency to come up with creative new solutions on how to ensure a safe and transparent digital information ecosystem. The communication ecosystem is a key tenant of our democratic system ensuring freedom of speech, access to reliable and multi-faceted information and the development of a socially shared narrative that guides decision making.

Christophe Leclercq, founder of the EURACTIV media network, chaired this session and gave his own recommendation: "These issues require urgent action if we are to save – and enhance – Europe's democracies. If we wait for a long directive drafting and decision making, we will be confronted with faster national initiatives, not always in line with freedom of expression and press freedom. And it is not just about principles, but about the economics of the overall ecosystem of media/platforms advertising. Also based on an event yesterday in Brussels by Fondation EURACTIV, I hear growing support from MEPs and media stakeholder for having this as a high priority for the next mandate, complementing the current "Digital Single Market" and the expected copyright directive. One possible formulation for a "top 10" priority could be close to the title of this very conference: "**Democracy in a digital world: sound platforms and independent media**". Within the EU institutions, this could even lead to bundling several competences at the Commission, and having a "Democracy & Media DG", cooperating with others including DG COMP, EEAS, and of course the European Parliament and Council"

> **Avoid censorship;**
> **Dilute fake news;**
> **Promote quality content.**

CHRISTOPHE LECLERCQ,
Executive Chairman at Fondation EURACTIV

Nicola Frank, Head of European Affairs of the European Broadcasting Union, gave the first impulse statement pointing out that online news and social media platforms today have an increasingly large amount of power on a global scale: a growing number of the population now access their news exclusively through these platforms and more traditional channels are becoming obsolete. One of the big problems with these modern online platforms is that they remain highly unregulated in terms

of what is or isn't allowed to be shared, and how issues like online disinformation or online bullying is monitored and counteracted.

How do we put order in the midst of this "information disorder"? A holistic approach is necessary. Such a holistic approach must include regulatory measures for online platforms to set a framework of which behaviours are and are not allowed, and how these should be enforced; media literacy education for our youth, but also for the older generation who have caught on to the social media trend and can fall prey to online disinformation and unknowingly contribute to the spread of fake news; a mechanism for fact-checking in order to ensure that fake news are not being spread either by malicious or uninformed actors; and strategies to increase the support for quality journalism.

Self-regulation is important, and should definitely continue to be endorsed, but it is certainly not enough to combat all the detrimental effects of online disinformation. A common, holistic approach with measurable goals that regulates not only how these platforms themselves operate, but also their relationship with third-party businesses and what data from their users they can and cannot provide to them. Understanding better what the platform's algorithms seek to achieve and how they work (this does not mean they should reveal the coding itself, which could remain classified information) would also be helpful. Transparency must be enhanced as well. For instance, when you ask 'Siri' or 'Alexa' a question, they provide an immediate answer, but you do not know where this information is coming from. Sources of information need to be disclosed, also in order to be more mindful of potential biases.

Our European values cannot be sacrificed in the age of digital information, but they should rather be protected and integrated.

Brett Schafer from the Alliance for Securing Democracy of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, continued by stressing that the general topic of 'disinformation' has been highjacked by the discussion on 'fake news.' This becomes even more apparent when looking at the runway to the EU elections. However, fake news is only one part of the problem within 'online disinformation'; the other aspects of disinformation should not be neglected.

The elections in the US, Brazil, and in many countries in Europe reveal that there are well-funded forces that are becoming more organised and institutionalised in order to spread misinformation and fear-mongering and in order to push people to vote in a way that benefits their political aims. These forces are becoming global in nature, and they add a new layer of complexity to tackling the problem of online disinformation. The platforms in which they operate (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc.) also have a global presence; we need to hold these platforms accountable for their impact in disseminating disinformation. The way in which these networks operate remains quite unregulated . For example, the guidelines for Twitter to determine how they ban a user (see the case of Alex Jones getting banned from Twitter) remains quite arbitrary, and not enforced in all cases. Platforms need to become more transparent, and their guidelines need to be made aware to all users and be of public access.

Professor Žiga Turk took what it seemed like a more liberal approach arguing that free speech rights also give people the right to fake news. Governments should not interfere with exchange of information and promote what they consider "truth". This created significant discussion within the group underlining

deep disagreements. There was agreement that it is important to understand the demand side, why it exists in the first place, and perhaps it would be more beneficial to attempt to reduce the demand for disinformation, so that supply would reduce as well. Also, governments could introduce measures that would help quality and pluralistic journalism and education of audiences as well as voluntary end-user tools that would flag untrustworthy information.

Paul-Jasper Dittrich, Policy Fellow at the Jacques Delors Institute Berlin concluded that most of the people attending agreed that some form of regulation at the government level is needed and desirable to curb the amount of online disinformation. The challenge is to still ensure freedom of speech and avoid censorship.

To educate the public and to debate how we want digital society to work, it is necessary to better understand how digital technologies impact society – complex processes and dynamics like opinion formation or making voting decisions. We can only fight disinformation or propaganda if we know more about where it comes from, how it travels through social networks and what drives its dissemination.

In the current situation, social media platforms continue to limit the access that researchers have to data about public communication on these platforms. This creates a situation, in which only Facebook, Google or Twitter can analyse key questions, e.g. the geographic origin of accounts and postings. Social media platforms claim that they are all about sharing, but they are not sharing their data (our data anyway) with society. As a result, science and society´s capacities are limited in producing evidence and creating expertise, because one cannot study what one cannot see. And consequently, one cannot regulate well what one doesn't fully understand.

[3] As remarked by Prof. Guido Vetere "understanding the algorithms used to deliver certain contents to certain individuals is a huge challenge. As a community, we should be able to control these processes, but this is a very complex technical issue: probably, even those who work from within these systems do not know how to control something as deep and complex as the processes at the basis of platforms' behavior, especially if AI is involved. Coercion and regulations are not the right tools to overcome these issues. Instead, governments – and the European Commission in particular – should take a proactive approach building policies and funding programmes to create and grow alternatives to the current centralized platforms, rather than trying to make arrangements with them" [SMART Expert Interviews, 2019]

Key takeaways:

We need better access to social media data for research. Building expertise on how platforms shape discourse dynamics or how they impact election campaigns, and developing tools to monitor democratic processes online depends on adequate data access.

- Create a European Model for the Digital able to safeguard the key European values and ensuring the re-establishment of a healthy media ecosystem;

- Develop short-term fixes that can be developed at a European level in the coming five years

- Ensure that **"Democracy in a digital world: sound platforms and independent media"** become a "top 10" priority for the next European Commisson.

BOX 3

The European Commission's Actions to Combat Disinformation.

Acting together to fight disinformation.

83% of Europeans think that fake news is a threat to democratic processes.

73% of internet users are concerned about disinformation online in the pre-election period.

Fighting disinformation while defending media freedom and pluralism is fundamental to protect European democracy. The rapid development of digital technologies has not only changed the way that citizens consume news, but also transformed their ways of interacting. Online platforms connect citizens, enable them to create content and break down geographic and societal barriers. Online platforms have become powerful information gateways, where thegatekeepers have financial interests in servicing the users

with customised information.

While this environment makes it easier for citizens to interact and express their political views, thus contributing to the healthy functioning of democratic societies, it also allows the rapid spread of harmful disinformation that seeks to disrupt democratic processes. Evidence shows that foreign state actors are also increasingly deploying disinformation strategies to influence societal debates, create divisions and interfere in democratic decision-making.

The Commission defines disinformation as 'verifiably false or misleading information that is created, presented and disseminated for economic gain or to intentionally deceive the public, and may cause public harm. The aim of disinformation is to distract and divide, to plant seeds of doubt by distorting and falsifying facts, thus confusing people and weakening their faith in institutions and established political processes. It is our common duty to defend the core value of freedom of expression and to protect European citizens from disinformation. This calls for three-fold action - effective policy measures to regulate online content and service providers, innovative communication to build resilience against disinformation, and the continued defence of media freedom and pluralism.

Over the past five years, the EU has strengthened its efforts to tackle disinformation. Following March 2015 European Council conclusions, the East StratCom Task Force was set up in the European External Action Service (EEAS). Together with the Commission and EU delegations in non-EU countries, the Task Force communicates about Union policies in eastern neighbourhood countries, strengthening the media environment and supporting media freedom and independence. It improves the EU's capacity to forecast, address and raise awareness about disinformation activities. The Commission has tackled disinformation from the legislative, security and communication perspective. In the last year, the Commission has underlined the importance of securing free and fair European elections. It has encouraged leading platforms to sign up to a code of practice against disinformation and put forward an action plan with proposals for a coordinated EU response to the challenge of disinformation. The platforms must now take their fair share of responsibility for ensuring free and unbiased speech in Europe.

The Action Plan focuses on four areas to build up EU and Member State capabilities and strengthen cooperation:

1) improving detection, analysis and exposure of disinformation;

2) building stronger cooperation and joint response through a new rapid alert system;

3) engaging with online platforms and industry, as per the code of practice signed by online platforms, leading social networks, advertisers and industry; and

4) raising awareness and empowering citizens through targeted campaigns and dedicated programmes promoting media literacy at European and national level.

Crucially, the fight against disinformation requires a constant outflow of fact-based messaging that helps citizens to distinguish reality from falsehood. The Commission responds to disinformation directly via its Spokesperson's Service, the Commission

Representations in the Member States and on social media by drawing on the expertise of its Network against Disinformation, a group of Commission mythbusters, data analysis from social media and insights from behavioural science. The Commission provides factual and accurate information on its policies and political priorities as well as rebutting any disinformation that seeks to mislead European citizens as regards the EU. In Member States, Commission Representations also play a part in mythbusting setting the record straight on the most persistent and commonplace falsehoods about the EU.

In Member States, Commission Representations also play a part in mythbusting setting the record straight on the most persistent and commonplace falsehoods about the EU. In the rapidly evolving world of disinformation, institutions need to continue efforts to adapt very quickly, not only to changing political circumstances, but also to the changing technological landscape. The use of 'bots' (online robots that perform repetitive tasks based on algorithms) in communication is already a reality. In the near future, artificial intelligence will also be increasingly used to carry out communication activities. The EU institutions and Member States need to continue efforts to adapt to and get ahead of this new reality. Education systems can play a part here: The Digital Education Action Plan could encourage more specialist training in artificial intelligence.

In order to continue fighting the increasing flow of disinformation, Member States and institutions need to team up to build on existing synergies and pool resources. Together, Member States and EU institutions need to make sure that the new rapid alert system is fully exploited. Going beyond information sharing, a real knowledge community with expertise on the different facets of disinformation is needed, drawing insights from research and Décodeurs de l'Europe - an initiative academia, fact-checkers, online by the Commission Representation platforms, technology experts and in Paris international partners. The Commission is ready to link up the expertise of its Network against Disinformation with the rapid alert system and provide a hub for EU policy related content to counter disinformation.

The Commission intends to facilitate the creation of a European multidisciplinary community to foster cooperation between all involved, in particular independent fact-checkers and academic researchers involved in the fight against disinformation. To this end, the Commission plans to establish a European Platform on Disinformation. The Platform will scale up collaboration between fact-checkers and academic researchers in order to ensure full coverage of the Union territory and facilitate the build-up and interconnection of relevant national organisations, including national disinformation centres.

The Ethics of Balancing the Internet and the Legal and Ethical implications of Data and AI

Chaired by **Professor Alain Strowel**, ALLEA Working Group Intellectual Property Rights, the session looked at the broader issue of policy for technology. There are few things that polarise society more than the issue of whether the internet should be regulated more and if so, in which way. With staunch supporters on all sides, this question often retreats to the barricades of basic ethical values and fundamental rights such as freedom of speech, privacy and the way to control and balance those competing objectives. Big data, advanced analytics, and the Internet of Things are transforming the way we work and organise. This session explored the challenges and opportunities posed by artificial intelligence and big data.

Digitalization is changing everything, at different speeds—the way businesses operate, the way states are governed, and the way people socialize and communicate with each other. Economic activity as well as the creation and delivery of public goods will depend more and more on data. In order to seize the opportunity, Europe has to prepare itself for this digital transformation.

Gianluca Misuraca, Senior Scientist for Digital Government Transformation at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission gave an initial overview of the work developed

on Artificial Intelligence and the possible implication for digital government transformation.

There was a general consensus in the group that any policy should not only prohibit but also enable. There also seemed to be a general notion that it is a very sensitive and polarised subject that can produce strong feelings regarding issues of privacy or freedom of expression. It was acknowledged that traditional concepts that are at the centre of public discourse, law and regulation, and concepts such as consent, privacy and ownership are changing due to digital technologies. There was also a general understanding that self-regulation by private (technology) companies would not be enough.

Within the group two approaches to regulation dominated the discussion:

- Radical change; this approach echoed the need to create new institutions, such as an Office of Technology Assessment to develop new regulations as well as institutions designed for today's environment;

- Update/Fine-tune existing rules; the second approach suggests working with existing tools, such as anti-trust and data protection authorities, and use existing frameworks for the current system.

One participant pointed to the problem today that the rules differentiating "information" vs "advertising" are not enforced on the content sharing platforms, allowing to advertise online or disseminate propaganda under cover in a non-transparent way. One solution could be to focus on the recipient instead of the author which could radically change the approach to regulation. Media policy is requested to respect and protect media freedom. The Internet, as well as social and networked media require policy answers to challenges such as data protection, content blocking and surveillance. It was concluded that media policy tools need to be developed along the all-digital media future.

This also fed into a wider discussion about how regulation can be a help rather than a hindrance and how the benefits of effective regulation can be understood more widely. It is mostly assumed that regulation will stifle innovation. However, regulating technologies can in fact drive different kinds of innovation. Regulation done the right way can accelerate innovation if it is providing the right incentives for the type of innovation that you think is going to lead to progress. One successful example is in renewable energies, where adopting regulations can force companies to think differently.

The central question should be what a regulatory system could look like to sustain responsible technologies, not solely to restrain irresponsible ones. Therefore, we need to create a regulatory system which is resilient and flexible, which essentially allows an element of test and learn from the regulatory side as well as from the technology side.

Sometimes regulation is actually really important in levelling the playing field and giving not just industry and researchers but also the public confidence that appropriate boundaries are being set. The debate around regulation has been a very technocratic debate so far. What has been missing is a recognition that regulation could start to address other important questions like the question of trust. Clear rules and regulation can provide an environment in which innovation thrives because regulation can create a high level of reliability and therefore trust.
There is also another issue: there is no clear evidence around the real impact of digital

technologies. We talk a lot about the harms of technology, but we lack the evidence on how to make sensible and responsible policy on technology. This is partly a failure amongst policymakers but is partly inhibited by the unwillingness of tech companies to share their information and data, often in the name of trade secret or data protection. It is very difficult for policymakers to make good policy about something they fundamentally do not understand. Acknowledging that gap in understanding is vitally important. A more independent algorithmic expertise would be particularly of help.

Regulation on digital technologies should also be viewed and established through a cross-sectoral approach, as it will affect all policy areas in the future. Dialogue between all stakeholders in drawing up regulation is essential here. This is where Europe has a great opportunity, because of its diversity and its enlightenment tradition. The challenge for us as Europeans is how do we create a European model of the internet which asserts our values? We need to shift the balance from the democratic state responding to technologies to the democratic state setting the rules under which technologies play. One of the biggest issues here is that most of the technology companies are not based in Europe.

What is also essential in order to tackle the challenges of regulation is a public dialogue and public conversation about how we want technologies to serve us as a society. How do we want to shape technologies and how do we want technologies to shape us?

Digitalization is quickly spreading throughout almost every aspect of daily life. It is becoming an integral part of trade, audio-visual services, copyright law, education, foreign policy, and healthcare. The number of public entities involved in the process of digitalization will only continue to grow. In the end, the digital transformation is about people, not technology.

> **In order to make the most of technological advances, the European Union needs to be open to transformation and have the courage to push forward with smart ideas. Whoever learns to use new tools and shows the courage to make the most of them, and creates the best and bravest ways to innovate, will benefit in all areas: social, economic, and political.**

KRZYSZTOF SZUBERT
Former Secretary of State / Deputy Minister of Digital Affairs, Poland. Visiting Fellow, University of Oxford, UK. Strategic Advisor of National Research Institute (NASK). Member of the Council of the National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR).

Key takeaways:

- Any regulation or policy should not only prohibit but enable, e.g. through the creation of reliability and hence trust;
- We need better evidence and expertise on digital technologies, their societal impact and the effects of regulation;
- More effective national and international cooperation as well as a clearer defined division of labour is necessary;
- Digital technologies affect all sectors, regulation should thus be established through a cross-sectoral approach.

BOX 4:

Legal and Ethical Implications of AI: the EU Perspective and the Role of Policy [4]

A direct consequence of the potential risks associated with the massive introduction of AI is the discussion of whether AI needs to be regulated at this stage or in the near future, and in which manner. There are moves advocating specific regulation in both the USA and the EU, each taking a different path, while the existence of such avenue in China is still unclear.

But, beyond mere regulation, it is clear that there is a political and ethical divide between China, USA and the EU on the regulatory and lawful usage of AI. In a way it has been argued that there could be a trade-off between availability of data on citizens behaviour and democracy (Larson, 2018).
In this connection, the EU declared the need for a high level of data protection, digital rights and ethical standards in AI and robotics already in December 2017 (European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies, 2018) and set out an ecosystem for nurturing a distinctive form of AI that is ethically robust and protects the rights of individuals, firms, and society at large. For example, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), opposed by many during preparation, is now perceived as a European asset, inspiring similar approaches outside Europe.

At the same time, building on calls to implement key ethical principles in AI such as beneficence, non-maleficence, the power to

decide, justice and explicability (Floridi et al., 2018), the Commission established the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI HLEG) and mandated it with drafting the AI Ethics Guidelines. The guidelines serve to shape a shared process towards defining a common, internationally recognized, ethical and legal framework for the design, production, use and governance of AI, robotics, and "autonomous" systems, and beyond them the whole technological development of AI.

These principles underpin the Policy and Investment Recommendations that are being prepared by the AI HLEG and which is anticipated will be based upon an AI that has an ethical purpose and technical robustness. Those two components are critical to enable responsible competitiveness, as it will generate user trust and, hence, facilitate AI's uptake.

Indeed, policy, not regulation, is the key constituent of future decisions on AI. AI is in fact, raising ethical issues that will challenge the collective preferences of each world region. These preferences in Europe are largely at odds with the USA or China, and existing policy frameworks are not well-suited to the task of preserving the differences.
It is thus crucial to understand how policy makers and regulators shall cope with the changes that AI-enabled services are bringing to society and in particular how they can enhance quality of public services of general interest, in particular personal services. Along this line, it is thus imperative to look at the legal and data governance aspects of the use of AI and the potential it can hold for civic empowerment. AI in fact is not only a policy challenge to be tackled, but also an opportunity to empower individuals and civil society as it offer a tremendous potential for innovating the way data are gathered and processed, thus paving the way to real-time informed policy-making based on predictive analytics and next generation computational modelling.

In this context, building on the declaration of cooperation on AI adopted by all EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland on 10 April 2018 the Communication "Artificial Intelligence for Europe" of 25 April 2018 proposed to design a joint European strategy and a Coordinated Plan on the Development and Use of AI, then adopted on 7 December 2018.
The coordinated plan provides a strategic framework for national AI strategies and encourages all Member States to develop their strategy, building on the work done at the European level. These are expected to outline investment levels and implementation measures, while common indicators to monitor AI uptake and development, as well as the success rate of the strategies in place will be ensured with the support of the Joint Research Centre through the AI WATCH .
As part of the AI WATCH, a specific Task (6) is devoted to provide an Overview and Analysis of the Use and Impact of AI in Public Services. AI in fact can contribute increasing the quality and consistency of services delivered in a variety of ways, it can also improve the design and implementation of policy measures, allow more efficient and targeted interventions, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public procurement, strengthen security, improve health and employment services and facilitate the interaction with wider audiences, for example by enabling smarter analytical capabilities and better understanding of real-time processes, and delivering shorter and richer feedback loops for all levels of governance.

The legal and ethical implications of AI use are thus of key importance for the operations of government and the delivery of fair and

inclusive public services. At the same time, the public sector plays a central role in defining the regulatory mechanisms and technical solutions for further development of AI based systems across society. As a matter of fact, since policies and regulations are made to guide human behaviours, the use of AI both for enhancing services to citizens and monitor/control human activities has implications in the way these systems are designed and controlled.

However, despite a vast body of work on Decision Support Systems and Human Computer Interaction, the dilemmas policy-makers are currently facing are far from straightforward and binary: If a police department turns to a machine learned predictive model to anticipate crime risk in different parts of a city, they face a range of debates. A desired end might be to treat all crime equally. But does that imply police should focus resources on areas of high crime at the expense of those with low crime, to maximise total arrests? Or does it mean that a crime in a low-risk area is just as likely to be intervened in as a crime in a high risk area? Areas conceived of as 'high risk' are rarely distributed at random, coupled instead to communities with different demographic or vulnerability distributions.

The means are also unclear. Should models be used to increase preventative measures, such as community policing, or to heighten response capacity after crimes have been reported?

Having these conversations - about the ends and means - while acknowledging the trade-offs and communicating with the populations at stake cannot be substituted by the creation of any indicators. Yet, a useful starting point is to think about the states of the world such interventions are set to advance. Mission-oriented innovation could be one practical framework that ties together ambitious agenda setting, and flexible toolkit for achieving goals at hand, and aiming to answer questions such as: What goals should public sector organizations pursue when commissioning automated decision systems? Whose benefits should be prioritized?
This in turn could ultimately contribute strengthening government 'legitimacy' in the digital world and increasing trust between citizens and a more "humane government".

[4] Extract from the Background paper prepared for the speech by Gianluca Misuraca, Senior Scientist at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, Digital Economy Unit, and Leader of the AI WATCH Task 6 – Use and Impact of AI in Public Services, at the Re-Imagine ALLEA Forum on Democracy in the Digital Society – Berlin, 24/01/2019.
[5] https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/ai-watch_en

Defining the World and Trust in Governance, Science and Expertise

An increasingly influential stream of research demonstrates the importance of cognition, emotion and values in political decision-making. Political cognition is emotionally shaped by certain narratives. This session explored the role of narratives in shaping political decisions, in particular in recent years when entire societies have made choices that seem "rationally" counterintuitive. Trust is the glue that holds societies together. It is what allows us to share information, collaborate and co-create joint visions and projects. Today, however, this vital component of society is being challenged as trust in institutions, experts and media are being challenged. This session looked at concrete projects and proposals to strengthen evidence, establish trustworthiness and foster trust-building.

This session, chaired by **Professor Maria Baghramian**, University College Dublin, explored the roles of values and narratives in building shared realities and objectives for society.

Giovanni La Placa, from the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, presented a research idea that will be investigated by

the JRC over the next few months: values and political identity in a multicultural society. It stems from the acknowledgment that there is a rise of populism in Europe. Are there values in Europe which resonate with extremism? Is there a democratic recession? Can economy be the only factor in explaining the decrease of democracy? Which values are held by EU citizens and political movements in Europe? It is proposed to set up a European barometer, to help monitor these trends. Values have become central in EU institutional discourse and there is a general acknowledgment that emotions play a strong role in the political realm.

Professor Andrzej Nowak, from the University of Warsaw, proceeded to explore the role of narratives in this debate. In fact, studies show that fake news have their roots in narratives rather than facts . Debunking can limit the spread of fake news to new individuals, but it may strengthen the beliefs of those who already are "believers". A narratives approach may offer clues on how to reach anti-science users. More research is needed on narratives and fake news, and on strategies for an effective prevention of spread of fake news.

Volker Stollorz, Chief Editor and Managing Director of the German Science Media Centre, started by underlining that direct communication between policy and people cuts out two major filters and pillars of the Enlightenment: science and journalism. We need these filters to save democracy. How do journalists produce narratives? They do not engage in an argument with, e.g., anti-vaccination campaigners, as this is impossible. Rather, they choose to engage with those who doubt, and strengthen a process of information-sharing with integrity. But there is an urgent need to regulate all the other new actors that do not behave democratically, e.g. on social media. There is an urgent need to act now. Finally, the market approach and the privatisation of science and journalism will hinder democracy. These institutions should remain public.

Dr Christoph Glauser, Director of the Institute for Applied Argumentation Research pointed out that politics and scientists need to urgently develop better ways of engaging and creating links with people.

It was generally agreed that mediation and gate-keepers are needed. Internet was created by scientists, for people with good intentions, but has evolved beyond that sphere now. The public service should pay a stronger role, and scientific advisers should make special efforts to engage with journalism. Funding should be included for the creation of stories and narratives in science, to help people trust science and its impact on policy. There is a need to build brands and use tricks that are not currently at use in the science world, e.g. the cult of personalities.

Sylwia Ufnalska (European Association of Science Editors, EASE) emphasized that one important step is to encourage good scientific writing and setting standards for this (EASE Guidelines, freely available in >20 languages). Ufnalska suggested that courses in scientific writing based on the Guidelines should be offered to PhD students and researchers, to promote effective and ethical scientific communication. Secondly, editorial standards for science journals should be popularized (e.g. COPE Guidelines), as journal editors are the "gatekeepers" who decide what gets published and what does not. Thirdly, predatory journals, which commercially publish low-quality papers without peer review or editorial judgement, should be exposed and

http://www.ease.org.uk/publications/author-guidelines-authors-and-translators/

condemned. Fourthly, continuous development of critical and analytical thinking skills at all levels of education is crucial. Last but not least, reduction of the bureaucratic workload of scientists is necessary. For example, there is a need for implementing more freedom of choice of science translators and author's editors by scientists for their manuscripts before submission to a journal.

The question was raised, whether this debate could realistically be taken to the EU level. It made no doubt that citizens develop a sense of agency and ownership at national level, but are European values strong enough and shared to extrapolate these issues at EU level?

The point was made that it would be extremely challenging to control or mediate the internet. The key is to learn how to react fast to fake news.

It was mentioned that in Europe one person out of six has a low literacy level, and that reaching out to this public in a digital world demands inclusive tools.

[7] In fact, professor Nowak is heading the research part on "Narratives" for a project commissioned by the European Commission to develop a study on "mechanisms that shape social media and their impact on society – SMART 2017/0090". Re-Imagine Europa is part of the consortium - together with CNR, PlusValue, the University of Warsaw, Catchy and HER – that has been working on this developing a first draft of the state of the art in research in this field: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mGy-BBTgD3JReO4qAAG8WAJFFkGiqfcV6C4hFddSExFc/edit

Key takeaways:

- Reframe some of the debates around disinformation in creating a better understanding of the role of narratives and the possible tools that narratology can provide in creating a systemic shift in disinformation prevention;

- Develop new narratives based on existing national narratives that can be "heard" by European citizens. This might take time but is necessary to create a shared vision for the future;

- Support science journalists, science writers and mediators in re-establishing trust between different sectors of society.

BOX 5

REPORT ON THE STATE-OF-THE-ART IN RESEARCH ON MECHANISMS THAT SHAPE SOCIAL MEDIA AND THEIR IMPACT ON SOCIETY

In 2018, the report on the state-of-the-art in research on how information spreads on social media was published. The report was developed as part of the project commissioned by the European Commission to develop a study on "mechanisms that shape social media and their impact on society – SMART 2017/0090".

The consortium developing this study is led by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Richerche (CNR) together with PlusValue, the University of Warsaw, Re-Imagine Europa and Catchy and HER and with the scientific guidance of Professor Guido Caldarelli (IMT Lucca) and Professor Andrzej Nowak (University of Warsaw).

The emergence of the network society has created a whole field of research in looking and trying to understand how information spreads on social media. Why do some things go viral? Why was Obama or Trump's social media campaign much more effective then their opponents? Why do people retire into the comfort of their own "echo-chambers" thus reaffirming their worldview creating an increasingly polarized world? Why has the information environment of social media developed in a way so different from that envisaged by its creators?

Research demonstrates that it is impossible to describe with simple features the effects of social media in the development of our society as the complexity in having to take account of the actions of millions of individuals far extends our capacity. Social media today are today an incredibly powerful instrument of news creation and distribution. The emergence and ubiquotousness of issues like "fake news", "micro targeting" and

"computational propaganda" demonstrate the power that a diverse range of actors ascribes to social media. It is therefore of the utmost importance to understand the forces and the causes that generate this phenomenon that is seriously changing the present society.

In light of the growing concern over fake news and how disinformation spreads on social media, the aim of this report was to do a desk review of existing research, evaluate the areas that look most promising and suggest areas where new original research is necessary.

The report will analyze and evaluate research from a variety of different fields:

SCIENCE OF NETWORKS: Statistical approaches, complex systems and network theory are key instruments to describe the spreading of information on social media. As communication today provides similar patterns to any complex network, be it biological networks or computer networks, an obvious approach to better understand the spreading of information on social media is to consider the analogous diffusion patterns. Although significant research has been done to understand the spreading of (mis)information on social media the complexity of the environment, the number of individuals, echo-chambers, make the system so highly complex that no simple model seems to be sufficient at this time. More interdisciplinary studies will be required in order to answer the fundamental questions relating to the working of social networks.

RESEARCH ALGORITHMS AND SOCIAL MEDIA: Today, algorithms curate everyday online content by prioritizing, classifying, associating, and filtering information. In doing so, they exert power to shape the users' experience and even their perception of the world In the light of the issues raised above, another core area of research has been looking into the structure and biases of algorithms and their effect on social media. Some of the most powerful influencers on elections today are the social media platforms and the algorithms they use to spread information. Yet it is not possible for researchers to measure and effectively study these phenomena as the majority of data is not made available by the privately owned platforms (Twitter, Facebook, etc.).

NARRATIVES: Narratives are the basis of the coordination and mobilization of individuals and society. One of the most interesting findings in modern psychology is that the process of understanding is inherently constructive in nature. Thus, the framework and codes used to organise our understanding of reality builds our view of reality and it is important to note that, for individuals and society, perceived reality is reality. As humans we understand the world through metaphors, images and stories. Phenomena related to the spread of disinformation on social media draw from these basic principles. Moreover, individuals actively seek information that confirms narrative schema an avoid information that contradicts their narratives. Efforts to debunk fake news that support adopted narratives often leads to paradoxical effect of initiating a search for information that supports the narratives and in effect strengthens the narrative.

NETWORKS OF TRUST: Evidence shows that the perception of "truth" depends on the narratives that single individuals accept as reality. Evidence in fact shows that information and misinformation spreads in the same way across social media. Research has

revealed that a key factor for individuals in classifying information is origin of the information. If the information comes from a source perceived as trusted and fits the accepted narrative, it will be accepted without question; if the information comes from a source perceived as trusted but does not fit the narrative the user will search for evidence; if the information comes from a source perceived as untrusted it will be discredited without much thought. Thus the study of networks of trust is becoming an increasingly important topic for researchers as much as that of the impact of influencers.

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS: Whilst narrative theory remains a very resource intensive field, sentiment analysis has come up to help with understanding the meaning of very high number of natural language or text messages. Sentiment analysis provides a way to aggregate information contained in a high volume of unstructured material. Sentiment analysis is one of the most active research fields in natural language processing both in scientific studies in computer science and the social sciences as well as in practical applications both for business (e.g. marketing) and societies (for example in diagnosis of public opinion and its shifts). Sentiment analysis is an especially important tool for the analysis of the content of social media, which contains a large volume of opinionated data.

PSYCHOMETRICS, PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS – PSY-OPS: the availability of big data combined with psychometrics and psychological operations has raised a number of questions for researchers, policymakers, media and other stakeholders. Indeed, as people use social media more and more, this enormous amount of data on individual behaviour and interests is today being used to make predictions about the future. The effects that this can have on our behaviours, institutional systems and our meaning of democracy are central questions today. Laboratory studies show that such persuasive appeals are more effective in influencing behavior when they are formulated to fit individuals' unique psychological characteristics. Recent research shows that people's psychological characteristics can be accurately predicted from the digital footprints left in the digital environment.

O2O EFFECT: Online to Offline (O2O), is a new model of e-commerce, in which online consumers can get products and services offline. This area of research is gaining traction as the culture of real virtuality becomes more pervasive. O2O mechanisms may also be used in political persuasion, where a group of users identified online as having particular political orientation, or a specific profile of likes, may be prompted for some real-world action, e.g. to attend a rally, join a meeting, stage a boycott etc. In a similar vein, an identified offline group of individuals (e.g. a list of individuals of a particular meeting) may be targeted in online messaging.

MICROTARGETING: One of the most interesting and novel trends today is that of microtargeting. Microtargeting uses big datamining techniques to adjust information to its viewer's profile. It is used by political parties and election campaigns to communicate with group of voters, that involve predictive market segmentation (aka cluster analysis), to influence elections. The case of Cambridge Analytica made apparent the technical capacity we have today in using new technologies to "manipulate" voters that governments across the world have started to create research groups looking especially at this problem, coined by the Guardian, as the

hijacking of our democracy.

DEBUNKING FAKE NEWS: The problem of fake news is much more complex than it looks at the first sight. Fake news is not a new phenomenon, they have been in the public sphere forever, as part of political propaganda, marketing efforts, popularity seeking by newspapers etc. The novelty of fake news is associated with the technological aspects of how it is propagated, rather then just the fact that false information is intentionally spread. The essence of democracy is that citizens make informed decisions and thus the access to reliable information is at the foundation of democracy. In fact, the fourth estate – the media – has held a key place in today's democratic systems. As the main channel of information spread shifts from traditional media to social media, the traditional ways of assuring the reliability of information, such as clearly established standards of responsible journalism, get progressively weaker. The systematic distortion of information by internal or external sources that we see today represents a dangerously effective way of manipulating societies.

In the 21st-century social media information war, faith in democracy is the first casualty. This is why a better understating of the way in which (mis)information spreads across social media, in a comprehensive and interdisciplinary way, is a prerequisite in order to be able to find meaningful ways to address the deeper issues that these new technologies are raising and how they are affecting social behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS and NEXT STEPS

If we do not change democracy, we cannot save democracy!

PROFESSOR MANUEL CASTELLS

The Forum on "Democracy in a Digital Society" underlined the existential nature of this topic for Europe and for democracy. Communication ecosystems are essential for societies as this is the space where shared visions and objectives are developed that allow for the mobilization of societies towards a common direction.

The digital era has drastically changed the nature of the public space, the actors who control the public space, the centralized control of communication and who has access to the most effective tools.

The result of the above is that the traditional deliberation process of democratic societies has become obsolete, amplifying the crisis of legitimacy and putting our democratic systems in danger.

We should not be naïve about the dangers and challenges that lay ahead but we should also take stock in the enormous opportunities presented by these technologies, as writing and printing before. However, this will require us to reimagine our institutions, our behaviour and our regulatory system.

As Castells said, "Europe is in danger because of a lack of ideas".

We need new ideas on how to tackle these challenges. We need to engage the public in this debate and in suggesting, testing and promoting alternative ideas of citizen engagement and meaningful participation, the role of parties, political institutions and regulatory frameworks.

As Erika Widegren, Chief Executive of Re-Imagine Europa concluded, this is not going to be easy as the human brain thinks in terms of images and stories; We have categories and thinking patterns. To disrupt existing thinking patterns and try to change the way the brain thinks about specific elements is a difficult exercise. But this is what will be needed.

To be able to achieve this we will need to construct a new way of analysing these issues working together with shared narratives and images that people can understand and reference to. This will be the core of the Re-Imagine Europa Task Force on Democracy in a Digital Society: to reimagine democracy in a digital society.

Key takeaways:

To conclude, the main take-aways from the forum can be summarised as follows:

• Democracy in a digital society is an existential question for Europe and should be a key priority for the next mandate. This should be reflected both in the European Commission set-up (examples: a Vice President responsible for this area; a Directorate General responsible for this area) as well as in the priorities of the next Commission;

• The important work on combatting disinformation needs to continue with stronger measures to be put in place to ensure that the core values of living democratic societies not be threatened: value of privacy, value of public discourse in the pluralistic society and the value of human dignity;

• Re-Imagine Europa proposes to set-up a European strategic centre for understanding how this new media landscape is affecting public discourse and to actively promote the development of a healthy public discourse: Re-Imagine Europa ECHO (European Centre for Hyperconnected Outreach)

• More efforts and financing need to be put in place to promote and test citizen engagement platforms in this new ecosystem. A European ecosystem needs to be promoted to allow for these initiatives to flourish and they need to be seen as a key priority when developing other regulations (GDPR and Copyright Directive);[9]

• Use traditional regulation where necessary, like competition law, intellectual property law, law of defamation, etc. to correct the most pressing market failures;

• We need better access to social media data for research. Building expertise on how platforms shape discourse dynamics or how they impact election campaigns, and developing tools to monitor democratic processes online depends on adequate data access.

• Reimagine the current very aggressive and advertisement-driven business model of the media ecosystem where the main currency is "attention" and where "truth" and arguments are not profitable; a model that is skewing reality, sensationalizing everything and that benefits from polarization and hot-headed debates.

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