

A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE ON RESPONSIBLE PLATFORM SOCIETIES

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Abstract

The growing pains of digitization involve intense struggles between competing ideological systems and contesting societal actors—market, government and civil society—raising important questions like: Who is or should be responsible and accountable for anchoring public values in digitized and dataficed societies? While two large ecosystems rule the global online world—a Chinese and American-based ecosystem—the latter has overwhelmingly penetrated Western-European societies, disrupting markets and labor relations, circumventing institutions, transforming social and civic practices, and affecting democracies. Online platforms paradoxically bypass the institutional processes through which European democratic societies are organized, while at the same time they clash with local, national and supra-national governments over who controls data-flows and algorithms.

Online architectures are governed by platform mechanisms (e.g. datafication and commodification) that dominate both private and public sectors. Public sectors such as health and education are particularly vulnerable to the commercial values inscribed in online architectures. Public values and the common good are the very stakes in the struggle over the platformization of societies around the globe. But how can public values be anchored in digital societies—both in terms of technological systems and in governance? This lecture concentrates on the position of European (private and public) interests vis-à-vis the interests of an American-based online ecosystem, driven by a handful of high-tech corporations. At the heart of the online media's industry's surge is the battle over information control: who owns the data generated by online social activities? Who is responsible for anchoring public values in an online world? Particularly in the European context, governments and civil society organizations can be proactive in negotiating public values on behalf of citizens and consumers.



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Van Dijck's academic discipline is media studies and her field of interests 'digital society.' She received her PhD from the University of California, San Diego, (USA) in 1992. Her work covers a wide range of topics in media theory, media and communication technologies, social media, and digital culture.

She is the author of ten books and (co-edited) volumes and over one hundred journal articles and book chapters. Van Dijck's book *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media* (Oxford UP, 2013) was distributed worldwide and was translated into Spanish, Chinese and Farsi. Her latest book, co-authored by Thomas Poell & Martijn de Waal is titled *The Platform Society. Public values in a connective world* (2018, Oxford University Press) will soon be published in Italian.