



Platformed Identities and Digital Civic Transformation: A Comparative Sociological Analysis of Youth Political Participation on TikTok and Instagram in South Korea and Germany

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Citation: Aziz (2026). Platformed Identities and Digital Civic Transformation: A Comparative Sociological Analysis of Youth Political Participation on TikTok and Instagram in South Korea and Germany (Book Antiqua 14pt Bold). *Journal of Social Change, Culture, and Society*, 10(4), xx–xx. <https://doi.org/0000-0000>

Published: 15/052026

ABSTRACT

This article examines how platform-specific communication structures shape youth political participation, identity negotiation, and socio-cultural transformation within digitally mediated societies. Drawing on a comparative sociological analysis of TikTok and Instagram among youth communities in South Korea and Germany, the study investigates how digital infrastructures interact with institutional cultures, communicative norms, and collective identity formation to produce distinct modes of civic engagement and social transformation. While existing scholarship has explored social media activism and digital participation, limited research comparatively analyzes how platform architectures and socio-political environments jointly mediate identity politics and civic practices across culturally differentiated democratic societies.

Using a mixed-method comparative framework integrating digital ethnography, discourse analysis, institutional analysis, and secondary survey datasets from OECD, UNESCO, and national digital participation reports, the study demonstrates that digital participation is not merely technologically enabled but institutionally conditioned and culturally negotiated. The findings indicate that TikTok fosters emotionally accelerated and visually performative civic identities, whereas Instagram facilitates more curated and networked forms of symbolic political participation. Comparative evidence further shows that South

Korean youth participation is shaped by hypercompetitive educational structures, compressed modernity, and

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digitally intensified collectivism, while German youth civic engagement reflects decentralized political culture, deliberative communication norms, and institutionalized digital literacy practices.

The article argues that platformed political participation constitutes a new form of communicative citizenship in which identity performance, algorithmic visibility, and institutional trust become interconnected mechanisms of social transformation. The study contributes to contemporary socio-cultural scholarship by developing a comparative framework linking digital communication structures, identity negotiation, and societal resilience within platformized democracies.

Keywords: digital society; youth political participation; TikTok; Instagram; identity politics; social transformation; communicative citizenship; comparative sociology; cultural hybridity; platform society

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital communication infrastructures has fundamentally transformed the organization of social interaction, political participation, cultural production, and identity formation across contemporary societies. The emergence of platform-based communication ecosystems has altered how individuals encounter information, construct social identities, negotiate collective belonging, and participate within institutional and civic processes (Castells, 1996; Couldry & Hepp, 2017). In recent years, digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become central arenas through which youth populations engage with political discourse, symbolic activism, and community-based participation. These transformations reflect broader structural shifts associated with globalization, mediatization, algorithmic governance, and the increasing fusion between digital communication systems and everyday social life (van Dijck et al., 2018).

Globally, younger generations increasingly rely on social media platforms not only for entertainment and interpersonal interaction but also for political awareness, identity negotiation, and civic participation. UNESCO (2024) reports that more than 70% of individuals aged 18–29 engage with political or social content through short-form digital platforms, while OECD youth participation surveys demonstrate significant growth in digitally mediated civic engagement across democratic societies between 2020 and 2025. Simultaneously, concerns regarding misinformation, algorithmic polarization, digital surveillance, and symbolic activism have intensified debates surrounding the democratic implications of platform societies (Zuboff, 2019). These developments suggest that digital participation cannot be understood solely through technological determinism but must instead be analyzed as a socio-cultural process shaped by institutional arrangements, communicative practices, and historically embedded cultural norms.

Within this context, youth political participation has undergone substantial transformation. Traditional forms of institutional political engagement, including party membership and formal civic organizations, have declined across many democratic societies, while digitally mediated participation has expanded through networked communication practices (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Social movements

increasingly emerge through platform-based visibility economies where symbolic performance, emotional communication, and algorithmic amplification shape public discourse. Consequently, political participation has become intertwined with digital identity performance and mediated cultural expression. Scholars argue that this transformation represents a shift from collective ideological mobilization toward individualized connective action mediated by digital communication infrastructures (Papacharissi, 2015).

However, existing social science literature remains limited in explaining how platform-specific communication logics interact with distinct socio-cultural and institutional environments to shape divergent forms of youth participation and social transformation. While previous studies emphasize the democratizing potential of social media participation (Jenkins et al., 2016), other scholars argue that digital participation often reproduces inequalities, symbolic exclusion, and fragmented publics (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). Moreover, much contemporary scholarship focuses primarily on Western liberal democracies without adequately examining how digitally mediated participation develops differently across culturally distinct contexts shaped by varying institutional structures, educational systems, media cultures, and civic traditions.

South Korea and Germany provide analytically valuable comparative cases because both societies demonstrate high levels of digital connectivity and democratic institutionalization while simultaneously exhibiting distinct socio-cultural trajectories regarding communication norms, generational politics, and civic participation. South Korea represents a highly digitized East Asian society characterized by compressed modernity, intense educational competition, collectivist social norms, and rapid technological integration (Chang, 2010). Youth political participation within South Korea has increasingly emerged through digitally accelerated communicative practices shaped by visual immediacy, emotional circulation, and high-frequency online engagement. By contrast, Germany represents a decentralized European democratic model characterized by institutionalized deliberative culture, strong public broadcasting traditions, and comparatively stable civic participation structures. German youth digital participation often emphasizes issue-based activism, environmental politics, and discursive legitimacy within institutional democratic frameworks.

The comparative significance of these cases lies in their differing relationships between digital platforms, institutional trust, and civic culture. While South Korean youth frequently navigate hypercompetitive social environments and digitally intensified collective pressures, German youth participation is shaped by stronger traditions of participatory governance and civic education. Consequently, identical digital platforms may produce substantially different social and cultural outcomes depending on institutional context and communicative norms. This study therefore treats platforms not as autonomous technological systems but as socio-cultural infrastructures embedded within broader institutional arrangements.

Academic scholarship concerning TikTok and Instagram has expanded rapidly since 2020. Abidin (2021) argues that TikTok's algorithmic structure intensifies participatory visibility through short-form emotional communication and accelerated trend circulation. Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik (2023) further

demonstrate that TikTok facilitates affective political participation through performative remix culture, enabling users to transform political communication into symbolic entertainment practices. Similarly, Leaver et al. (2020) emphasize that Instagram participation reflects curated identity construction and aspirational visibility within consumer-oriented platform economies. Yet these studies often prioritize platform mechanics over broader socio-cultural interpretation.

Other scholars have explored digital participation through the lens of identity politics and social transformation. Butler's (1990) theory of performativity remains highly relevant for understanding digitally mediated identity construction, while Giddens (1991) conceptualizes late modern identity as reflexively constructed within rapidly changing institutional environments. Castells (1996) argues that network societies restructure power through informational flows and communicative infrastructures. More recent scholarship by Couldry and Hepp (2017) conceptualizes deep mediatization as a condition in which social institutions become increasingly dependent on digital communication systems. These theoretical approaches collectively suggest that digital participation must be analyzed as both a communicative and institutional process.

Nevertheless, significant research gaps remain. First, existing literature inadequately compares how different digital platforms shape political participation through distinct communicative architectures. TikTok's algorithmically accelerated short-form content differs substantially from Instagram's networked visual curation systems, yet comparative analyses remain underdeveloped. Second, current studies insufficiently integrate institutional and cultural dimensions into analyses of digital participation. The interaction between educational systems, civic cultures, media governance structures, and digital participation practices remains theoretically fragmented. Third, comparative scholarship rarely examines how platformed identity negotiation contributes to broader societal transformation processes, including institutional trust, collective resilience, and democratic participation.

This article addresses these gaps by comparatively analyzing youth political participation on TikTok and Instagram within South Korea and Germany. The study develops a socio-cultural framework linking digital communication structures, identity negotiation processes, and institutional participation dynamics. Rather than treating digital participation as merely technological engagement, the article conceptualizes platformed participation as a form of communicative citizenship in which algorithmic visibility, symbolic performance, and institutional legitimacy intersect.

The novelty of this article lies in three principal contributions. First, it develops a cross-platform comparative framework integrating platform architecture with socio-cultural institutional analysis. Second, it comparatively examines East Asian and European democratic contexts to explain how civic cultures mediate digital participation differently. Third, it advances the concept of communicative citizenship to explain how digitally mediated identity practices contribute to broader social transformation processes within platform societies.

Analytically, the article proposes that digital communication infrastructures influence identity negotiation processes, which subsequently shape civic participation patterns and broader societal outcomes.

Specifically, the study conceptualizes the following relational mechanism: platform communication structures → identity performance and visibility negotiation → civic participation practices → institutional trust and social transformation outcomes. This framework enables examination of how communicative systems mediate cultural adaptation and democratic participation differently across institutional contexts.

Accordingly, the objective of this study is to comparatively analyze how TikTok and Instagram shape youth political participation and identity negotiation in South Korea and Germany, and to explain how these platformed communication practices contribute to broader socio-cultural transformation within digitally mediated democratic societies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a comparative mixed-method socio-cultural research design integrating digital ethnography, critical discourse analysis, institutional analysis, and comparative sociological interpretation to examine how platform-specific communication systems shape youth political participation and identity negotiation in South Korea and Germany. The research design is grounded in theories of mediatization, communicative citizenship, and networked participation, particularly drawing from Castells' concept of network society, Butler's framework of performative identity, and Couldry and Hepp's theory of deep mediatization. The comparative logic was selected to analyze how identical digital platforms operate differently within distinct institutional and cultural contexts characterized by divergent civic traditions, educational systems, communication norms, and political participation structures. TikTok and Instagram were selected as analytical units because they represent two dominant but structurally differentiated visual communication platforms among global youth populations. The study comparatively analyzes four interconnected dimensions: platform communication architecture, identity performance practices, institutional trust relations, and civic participation outcomes. Empirical materials include digital communication archives from public political hashtags between 2022 and 2025, OECD and UNESCO youth participation datasets, EU Digital Society reports, South Korean media policy documents, German civic education frameworks, and peer-reviewed scholarship concerning youth digital culture and political communication. Digital ethnographic observation focused on recurring thematic patterns related to climate activism, gender discourse, labor precarity, and identity-based political mobilization among users aged 18–29.

Analytical interpretation was conducted through iterative comparative coding procedures emphasizing communicative practices, symbolic representation, emotional discourse, visibility strategies, and institutional framing. Critical discourse analysis examined how platform users articulated political legitimacy, social belonging, and collective grievances through visual and textual communication practices. Triangulation was achieved through cross-referencing platform observations with demographic participation data, institutional reports, and comparative communication studies to strengthen analytical validity. Ethical considerations centered on the use of publicly accessible digital content without reproducing identifiable user information, consistent with digital sociology ethical guidelines concerning online observational research. The study acknowledges several limitations. First, platform algorithms remain partially opaque, limiting direct access to recommendation logics shaping content visibility.

Second, the rapidly evolving nature of platform communication cultures constrains long-term generalization. Third, Copyright © 2025 by Author/s. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

while the comparative framework emphasizes institutional and cultural variation, localized regional differences within both countries may exceed the analytical scope of this study. Nevertheless, the methodological integration of digital ethnography, institutional analysis, and comparative sociological interpretation enables a theoretically grounded examination of how platformed communication practices mediate broader processes of social and cultural transformation.

Findings and Discussion

1. Platform Architecture and the Transformation of Civic Participation

The comparative findings indicate that TikTok and Instagram produce distinct communicative environments that fundamentally shape how youth engage in political participation and collective identity formation. TikTok's algorithmic architecture privileges rapid emotional circulation, participatory imitation, and high-frequency visibility production. Political participation on TikTok therefore becomes strongly associated with affective immediacy and symbolic performance. In South Korea, youth political communication on TikTok frequently integrated emotional narratives concerning educational pressure, labor insecurity, and gender inequality through short-form audiovisual content emphasizing immediacy and collective resonance.

By contrast, Instagram participation demonstrated greater emphasis on curated identity representation and networked symbolic affiliation. German youth users frequently utilized Instagram to construct issue-oriented political identities connected to climate activism, anti-discrimination discourse, and democratic participation campaigns. Unlike TikTok's rapid visibility cycles, Instagram participation reflected more stable forms of visual-political branding and long-term activist networking. The comparative evidence demonstrates that platform structures influence not merely communication styles but broader patterns of political legitimacy and civic identity construction.

This finding supports Castells' (1996) argument that communication infrastructures reorganize power relations within network societies. However, the findings also extend existing scholarship by demonstrating that algorithmic communication systems generate differentiated forms of communicative citizenship. TikTok participation emphasizes visibility acceleration and emotional synchronization, whereas Instagram facilitates relational identity curation and symbolic consistency. These distinctions shape how youth perceive political efficacy and social belonging.

Institutionally, South Korean youth participation was strongly influenced by digitally intensified educational competition and compressed social temporality. Political expression frequently emerged through emotionally charged narratives connected to generational exhaustion and future uncertainty. German youth participation, by contrast, reflected stronger institutional integration through school-based civic education programs and environmental policy discourse. Consequently, digital participation in Germany often complemented institutional democratic engagement, whereas South Korean participation more frequently functioned as a compensatory communicative space responding to institutional stress.

Previous scholarship frequently conceptualizes digital activism as universally democratizing (Jenkins et al., 2016). However, the comparative evidence demonstrates that platform participation remains structurally conditioned by institutional trust and cultural expectations. Digital participation therefore reflects broader societal inequalities and institutional tensions rather than existing independently from them.

2. Identity Negotiation, Visibility Politics, and Cultural Hybridity

The findings further indicate that youth political participation increasingly operates through identity-centered communicative practices shaped by platform visibility economies. Across both cases, political participation was closely intertwined with self-presentation, emotional authenticity, and symbolic affiliation. However, substantial differences emerged regarding how identities were negotiated and publicly legitimized.

In South Korea, digital political participation frequently reflected tensions between collectivist social expectations and individualized self-expression. TikTok users often engaged in hybrid communicative practices combining global activist language with localized cultural symbolism. Feminist discourse, labor precarity narratives, and mental health activism frequently appeared through visually stylized forms emphasizing emotional vulnerability and collective recognition. These practices reflect broader transformations associated with globalization and cultural hybridity, where transnational digital culture intersects with localized institutional pressures.

German youth participation displayed comparatively greater emphasis on deliberative inclusivity and intersectional representation. Instagram-based activism frequently integrated anti-racism, LGBTQ+ advocacy, environmental sustainability, and refugee solidarity within interconnected communicative networks. Identity negotiation therefore operated through broader discursive coalitions emphasizing inclusivity and democratic participation. This reflects Germany's institutional emphasis on civic pluralism and historical memory politics.

The comparative evidence demonstrates that platformed identity formation cannot be understood solely through individualized expression. Rather, digital identity practices are embedded within broader communicative systems that shape which identities become visible, legitimate, and politically influential. Butler's (1990) concept of performativity becomes particularly relevant within digital environments where repeated symbolic performances generate political recognition and collective belonging.

At the same time, the findings complicate simplistic assumptions regarding digital empowerment. Visibility economies frequently rewarded emotionally intensified and aesthetically optimized content, producing new forms of symbolic inequality. Youth participants possessing greater cultural capital, digital literacy, and aesthetic fluency achieved significantly higher communicative visibility. This reflects Bourdieu's (1984) argument that symbolic power operates through unequal access to legitimate forms of representation.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that globalization does not produce homogeneous digital cultures. Instead, global platform infrastructures interact with localized cultural norms to generate hybrid forms of participation. South Korean users frequently adopted globally circulating activist vocabularies while adapting them

to culturally specific concerns regarding educational competition and generational hierarchy. German youth integrated transnational climate discourse with historically embedded democratic participation norms. Consequently, cultural hybridity emerges not as cultural convergence but as negotiated adaptation within platform-mediated communication systems.

3. Institutional Trust, Digital Participation, and Democratic Legitimacy

A central finding of this study concerns the relationship between institutional trust and digitally mediated civic participation. Comparative evidence demonstrates that digital participation functions differently depending on broader perceptions of institutional legitimacy and civic inclusion.

In Germany, digital activism frequently complemented institutional participation. Youth users often linked online political expression with offline demonstrations, electoral engagement, and civic organizations. Environmental activism associated with Fridays for Future demonstrated particularly strong integration between online mobilization and institutional democratic participation. Instagram served as a coordination mechanism reinforcing collective legitimacy and public accountability.

Conversely, South Korean digital participation frequently reflected ambivalent relationships with institutional authority. Youth political discourse often emphasized distrust toward educational institutions, labor markets, and political elites. TikTok activism concerning labor precarity and gender inequality frequently articulated feelings of institutional exclusion and generational marginalization. Digital participation therefore functioned not only as political engagement but also as symbolic resistance against perceived institutional rigidity.

The socio-cultural findings indicate that institutional trust significantly shapes whether digital participation contributes to democratic integration or communicative fragmentation. This finding extends previous scholarship concerning connective action by demonstrating that platform participation remains deeply embedded within institutional structures rather than replacing them entirely.

Importantly, the findings reveal that algorithmic communication systems can simultaneously strengthen and destabilize democratic legitimacy. On one hand, digital platforms enable marginalized youth voices to achieve visibility and collective organization. On the other hand, algorithmic amplification often privileges emotionally polarized content, intensifying communicative fragmentation and symbolic conflict. South Korean TikTok discourse demonstrated particularly high levels of gender polarization and antagonistic identity framing, while German Instagram activism exhibited comparatively greater discursive moderation and coalition-building.

These differences reflect broader institutional communication cultures. Germany's stronger public media institutions and civic education systems appear to moderate communicative polarization by reinforcing deliberative democratic norms. South Korea's hypercompetitive social environment and accelerated digital culture contribute to more emotionally intensified communicative practices. Therefore, platform outcomes cannot be understood independently from institutional governance systems and broader socio-cultural structures.

The comparative evidence further suggests that digital participation increasingly functions as a mechanism through which youth negotiate democratic legitimacy itself. Civic participation is no longer limited to institutional procedures but increasingly mediated through communicative visibility, symbolic recognition, and digital belonging. This transformation represents a shift toward communicative citizenship where public participation becomes inseparable from digital identity performance.

4. Platform Society, Social Transformation, and Generational Change

The broader societal implications of platformed participation involve substantial transformations in social interaction, political culture, and generational identity formation. Across both cases, youth political participation increasingly blurred distinctions between civic engagement, cultural consumption, and identity performance. Political participation became embedded within everyday communication practices rather than confined to formal institutional settings.

This transformation reflects broader processes associated with platform society (van Dijck et al., 2018), where digital infrastructures reorganize economic, cultural, and political interaction simultaneously. The findings demonstrate that platform participation reshapes not only communication patterns but also temporal experiences, emotional norms, and perceptions of collective belonging.

In South Korea, digitally mediated participation contributed to emerging forms of generational solidarity centered on shared experiences of economic insecurity, educational pressure, and emotional exhaustion. Political communication frequently emphasized affective recognition rather than ideological coherence. TikTok activism therefore functioned as a mechanism of emotional collectivization through which youth articulated structural anxieties associated with neoliberal modernization.

In Germany, digital participation more frequently reinforced issue-based coalition politics and institutional accountability. Youth activism concerning environmental sustainability and refugee rights integrated online communication with established civic participation channels. Consequently, digital participation contributed to broader democratic renewal rather than merely symbolic expression.

These differences highlight how platformed communication interacts with varying modernization trajectories. South Korea's compressed modernization produced accelerated forms of digital participation characterized by emotional intensity and rapid symbolic circulation. Germany's comparatively stable institutional environment facilitated slower but more organizationally integrated forms of participation.

The findings challenge technologically deterministic assumptions suggesting that digital platforms autonomously democratize participation. Instead, platform societies reproduce and transform existing institutional inequalities, cultural norms, and communicative hierarchies. Social transformation therefore emerges through interaction between platform architectures, institutional systems, and localized cultural practices.

Table 1. Comparative Matrix of Social Structures, Cultural Transformation, and Societal Outcomes

Variable	Case 1: South Korea	Case 2: Germany	Empirical Evidence	Analytical Interpretation
Dominant Platform Logic	TikTok-driven rapid visibility culture	Instagram-driven curated network participation	High-frequency short-form activism in Korea; issue-based visual campaigns in Germany	Platform architecture shapes distinct civic communication styles
Institutional Trust	Ambivalent youth trust toward institutions	Relatively stronger civic institutional legitimacy	OECD youth trust indicators; civic participation reports	Institutional legitimacy mediates digital participation outcomes
Identity Formation	Collectivist-individualist tension	Deliberative pluralist identity politics	Gender discourse and labor precarity activism versus coalition-based activism	Cultural norms influence communicative citizenship patterns
Political Communication Style	Emotional immediacy and symbolic resistance	Discursive coalition-building and advocacy	TikTok emotional activism versus Instagram campaign coordination	Platform culture shapes political legitimacy mechanisms
Civic Participation	Symbolic and expressive participation	Hybrid online-offline institutional participation	Youth digital engagement statistics and protest participation reports	Institutional integration affects democratic resilience
Social Transformation Outcome	Generational anxiety and digital collectivization	Democratic renewal through participatory integration	Comparative digital activism patterns	Platform participation contributes differently to societal adaptation
Communicative Risks	Polarization and emotional fragmentation	Selective inclusion and symbolic	Gender conflicts and algorithmic	Platform governance influences communicative

The comparative matrix demonstrates that digital participation outcomes emerge through interaction between communication architecture, institutional legitimacy, and cultural norms. TikTok's emotionally accelerated visibility system intensified symbolic participation within South Korea's compressed social environment, producing high levels of affective mobilization but also communicative polarization. Instagram's comparatively curated communication environment facilitated more organizationally integrated participation within Germany's deliberative civic culture.

Importantly, the evidence indicates that platform participation does not operate independently from institutional governance systems. Rather, democratic resilience depends upon whether digital participation becomes institutionally integrated or communicatively fragmented. The findings therefore support a socio-cultural interpretation of platform society emphasizing interaction between digital infrastructures, civic culture, and institutional trust.

Conceptual Framework

This article proposes the following conceptual framework:

Platform Communication Structures → Identity Negotiation and Visibility Politics → Civic Participation Practices → Institutional Trust Formation → Social and Cultural Transformation

The framework conceptualizes digital participation as a socio-cultural process mediated through communicative infrastructures. Platform architectures shape how visibility is distributed, how identities are performed, and how political legitimacy is negotiated. Identity negotiation subsequently influences civic participation practices by determining which forms of participation become socially recognizable and politically meaningful.

Institutional trust functions as a mediating mechanism shaping whether digital participation contributes to democratic integration or communicative fragmentation. High institutional trust encourages hybrid online-offline participation and civic resilience, whereas low institutional trust intensifies symbolic resistance and affective polarization. Ultimately, social transformation emerges through recursive interaction between digital communication systems, institutional legitimacy, and cultural adaptation processes.

This framework contributes to contemporary socio-cultural scholarship by integrating mediatization theory, identity studies, and institutional sociology into a unified analytical model capable of explaining divergent democratic outcomes within platform societies.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to comparatively analyze how TikTok and Instagram shape youth political participation and identity negotiation in South Korea and Germany, and how these digitally mediated practices contribute to broader socio-cultural transformation. The findings demonstrate that digital participation cannot be understood merely as technologically enabled interaction. Rather, platform participation represents a structurally embedded socio-cultural process shaped by institutional legitimacy, communication architecture, cultural norms, and identity politics.

The comparative analysis reveals that TikTok fosters emotionally accelerated and performative civic participation characterized by rapid visibility cycles and affective mobilization, while Instagram facilitates more curated and networked forms of symbolic activism. However, platform effects are mediated significantly by broader institutional and cultural conditions. In South Korea, digitally mediated participation reflects tensions associated with compressed modernization, educational hypercompetition, and institutional distrust, resulting in emotionally intensified forms of symbolic political expression. In Germany, stronger civic education systems and participatory democratic traditions enable greater integration between online communication and institutional civic engagement.

Theoretically, this article contributes to social and cultural scholarship by advancing the concept of communicative citizenship, emphasizing how identity performance, algorithmic visibility, and institutional legitimacy intersect within platform societies. The study extends mediatization theory by demonstrating that digital communication systems reshape not only information flows but also civic identity formation, democratic participation norms, and collective belonging practices. Furthermore, the article contributes comparatively grounded insights into how globalization and cultural hybridity interact with localized institutional contexts to produce differentiated forms of digital participation.

Empirically, the study demonstrates that platform societies reproduce existing inequalities and communicative hierarchies while simultaneously generating new opportunities for civic participation and collective recognition. Digital participation therefore represents both an emancipatory and stratifying process. Institutional trust emerges as a critical mediating factor determining whether platform participation contributes to democratic resilience or communicative fragmentation.

The policy implications are substantial. Educational institutions, civic organizations, and media governance frameworks must recognize that digital participation increasingly constitutes a central arena of democratic socialization. Civic education programs should therefore emphasize digital literacy, communicative ethics, and algorithmic awareness rather than treating online participation as separate from democratic citizenship. Platform governance policies should additionally address algorithmic amplification dynamics that intensify symbolic polarization and communicative exclusion.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. Rapidly evolving platform cultures constrain longitudinal generalization, while opaque recommendation algorithms limit direct examination of visibility mechanisms. Future research should therefore incorporate longitudinal comparative approaches and expanded cross-regional analysis involving non-democratic contexts and emerging digital platforms.

Additional scholarship is also needed concerning intersections between artificial intelligence, algorithmic governance, and evolving forms of communicative citizenship.

Ultimately, this article argues that platformed political participation constitutes a defining feature of contemporary social transformation. Digital communication systems are not external technological tools but foundational infrastructures through which democratic legitimacy, collective identity, and social belonging are increasingly negotiated. Understanding contemporary social transformation therefore requires sustained comparative analysis of how communicative systems reshape institutional participation, cultural adaptation, and democratic life itself.

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