

Public Deliberation in the Digital Age

Platforms, Participation, and Legitimacy

Edited by
Emilien Paulis, Raphaël Kies,
and Alina Östling

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Introduction

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Emilien Paulis, Raphaël Kies and Alina Östling

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1 Introduction

Digital platforms as a new frontier for deliberative democracy

Emilien Paulis, Raphaël Kies and Alina Östling

In the context of a global polycrisis (Lawrence et al. 2024, Zaki et al. 2024), democracies around the globe are facing mounting decision-making challenges in addressing complex, intertwined societal issues such as climate change (Lindvall 2021), economic inequality (Rau & Stokes 2025), and growing political polarization (Carothers & O'Donohue 2019). At the same time, public trust in traditional political institutions is waning (Pharr et al. 2000, Prats et al. 2024, Valgarðsson et al. 2024), and citizens' demand for more inclusive, transparent, and participatory forms of governance has spread over the last decades (Christensen 2020, Norris 2000, Theocharis & van Deth 2019). In response, public institutions have adapted their participatory offer beyond elections and multiplied the implementation of various forms of democratic innovations, such as referendums (Hollander 2019, Qvortrup 2024), deliberative mini-publics (OECD 2020, Paulis et al. 2020), e-petition systems (Böhle & Riehm 2013), and participatory budgeting (Sintomer et al. 2016). These innovations aim to increase, diversify, and deepen opportunities for citizen participation in governance, policy, and public administration processes (Elstub & Escobar 2019, Geissel & Newton 2012, Smith 2009). The spread of democratic innovations, and more specifically of talk-centric innovations like deliberative mini-publics, has sparked renewed interest in deliberative democracy (Goodin 2012), a theoretical and practical approach that emphasizes dialogue, reason-giving, and collective decision-making as fundamental principles for achieving legitimacy in democratic processes (Habermas 1990). In parallel with this, the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the increasing role of digital platforms in our society, often described as “platformization” (Van Dijk et al. 2018), have reshaped the way citizens engage with politics (Theocharis et al. 2023) and how institutions can (or should) facilitate their participation (Goñi 2025, Hendriks & Michels 2024, Landemore 2020, Shin et al. 2024, Suherlan 2023), creating both opportunities and challenges for participatory and deliberative practices. This book explores the intersection of these two patterns, offering a comprehensive examination of how digital platforms are reshaping deliberative processes and, consequently, democratic engagement.

Research gap: connecting digital platforms and deliberative processes

Deliberative democracy, as conceptualized by scholars such as Habermas (1990), Cohen (1989), Mansbridge (1999), and Dryzek (2002), is a broad research paradigm that highlights the role of reasoned public discourse in legitimizing democratic decisions. Very generally, it can be described as a “talk-centric” rather than “vote-centric” view of democracy (Chambers 2003: 308) in which democracy is studied and evaluated “from the point of view of the quality of the processes through which individuals come to discuss, debate and mutually justify their respective stances before voting or taking other sorts of political action” (Scudder & White 2023: 12). Central to this theory is the belief that inclusive, equitable, and transparent deliberation can lead to better, more legitimate policy outcomes (Hicks 2002). Over the past two decades, deliberative democracy has evolved from an idealized normative framework into a practical model implemented through democratic innovations such as deliberative mini-publics (Curato et al. 2021, OECD 2020, Paulis et al. 2021). These mechanisms have gained traction as potential remedies for the democratic deficit in traditional governance structures (Bächtiger & Dryzek 2024, Beauvais & Warren 2018, Button & Mattson 1999, Jain & Dienel 2024, Kuyper & Wolkenstein 2018, Podgórska-Rykała 2023, Setälä & O’Flynn 2024, Van Der Does & Jacquet 2023). However, despite their promises, deliberative practices face significant challenges (Grönlund et al. 2009, Welp 2024), including limited scalability, representativeness, and effectiveness in influencing policy outcomes, which may trigger broader problems of accountability and, consequently, issues of public acceptance and legitimacy (Böker 2017, Hammond 2021, Lafont 2019).

Simultaneously, with the emergence of the Internet and the rapid development of online information and communication technologies, the digital transformation of society has brought profound changes to democratic actors, practices, and procedures (Akrivopoulou & Garipidis 2013, Barberà et al. 2021, Coleman & Blumler 2009, Gherghina 2024, Gherghina et al. 2025, Hacker & Van Dijk 2000, Hao & Ryan 2013, Hoff et al. 2000, Musiał-Karg & Luengo 2022, Prins et al. 2017, Reddick 2010, Ronchi 2019, Schwanholz et al. 2018, Theocharis & Van Deth 2019), thereby raising also more specific questions about its implications for deliberative processes. Early iterations of digital democracy focused on the emergence of online consultative and campaigning tools (e.g., emails, online polls, blogs, and websites), often referred to as “first-wave” digital democracy (Chadwick 2006). These tools primarily facilitated an online presence, information dissemination, and unidirectional communication between governments and citizens. However, the “second wave” of digital democracy, which has emerged alongside the rise of social media and, more importantly, participatory platforms, shifts the focus toward digital tools that enable more interactive decision-making and mass participation. Over the past decade, social networking platforms have provided new informal spaces for citizens to engage with one another and with various social and political causes and organizations. At the same time, a new generation of digital decision-making platforms—such as LiquidFeedback, Loomio, Pol.is, DemocracyOS, CitizenOS, Adhocracy, Consul, Decidim, Go Vocal, and Rousseau—has been developed to

allow ordinary citizens to contribute more formally to political party programs and policy proposals, participate in urban planning and participatory budgeting projects, vote in referendums, and even select party candidates via online primaries (Pentland & Tsai 2024, Simon et al. 2017). Through these platforms, citizens do not merely delegate decision-making to representatives but can participate directly, while reducing the costs of participation (Deseriis 2021).

These developments have sparked a fast-growing field of research on the interconnection between digital platforms and deliberative democracy theories and practices (Chambers & Gastil 2021, Gastil 2021, Landemore 2020, Lima 2025, Mikhaylovskaya 2024). This convergence raises questions about compatibility, specifically, whether digital platforms can meet the stringent standards of deliberative democracy or whether they inadvertently compromise deliberative ideals. Indeed, the use of digital interfaces and technologies contrasts with conventional methods of public deliberation, which have historically taken place in person, in venues such as town halls. This debate has gained particular prominence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many large-scale deliberative processes transitioned entirely online, demonstrating a certain resilience in upholding deliberative democratic principles (Elstub et al. 2021). At the same time, this shift has underscored the need for more in-depth research on how in-person deliberative expectations translate to the online sphere (Chwalisz 2021).

The first important dimension in approaching this question is how digital platforms can promote inclusive deliberative processes. One line of scholarship has explored how digital tools—and more recently, platforms—can facilitate deliberation by addressing inclusion challenges such as geographic, temporal, and socio-economic constraints. For nearly two decades, this literature has oscillated between the “revolution” or “equalization” and “normalization” hypotheses (Albrecht 2006, Chadwick 2011, Kies 2010, Nabatchi & Leighninger 2015, Van Dijk 2006, Wright 2012). Early studies argued that digital tools have the potential to expand participation by reducing geographic and temporal barriers and enabling individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to take part in deliberation (Coleman & Moss 2012, Dahlberg 2001). However, critics contend that digital tools often replicate or even exacerbate existing offline inequalities, highlighting a lack of representativeness and the “digital divide,” in which access to technology, digital literacy and efficacy, and algorithmic biases may exclude marginalized voices from online deliberation (Epstein et al. 2014, Lutz et al. 2019, Kies 2010, Min 2010, Papacharissi 2010, Robinson et al. 2015, Strandberg 2015, Wisniewski 2013). Today, scholars take a more cautious and pragmatic approach, recognizing that the effects of digital deliberation depend on the specific case or platform under scrutiny (Deseriis 2023, Kennedy et al. 2021, Van Der Does & Bos 2021). Moreover, while inequalities in participation persist in digital decision-making platforms (Baek et al. 2011, Legard & Hovik 2022, Van Den Berg et al. 2020), some suggest that they do not necessarily translate into inequalities in outcomes (Mellon et al. 2025). Ultimately, a key open question remains in the literature (Shortall et al. 2022): can the use of digital platforms in deliberative processes attenuate or reinforce participatory inequalities?

A second important dimension concerns the quality of deliberation in digital spaces (Davies & Peña Gangadharan 2009, Monnoyer-Smith & Wojcik 2012), which has attracted the most substantial attention in online deliberation research (Friess & Eilders 2015). Fundamentally, the key question is whether and how digital platforms—both synchronous and asynchronous—can achieve the same quality standards as in-person deliberation, making the issue of measurement central from pioneering studies to contemporary research (Beauchamp 2020, Dahlberg 2004, Graham & Witschge 2003, Janssen & Kies 2005, Kies 2010, 2022, Shin & Rask 2021, Steenberger et al. 2003). In the early days of digital communication, there was a strong belief that the Internet could enhance democracy and deliberation, with online debates—then primarily occurring in forums and basic e-consultation platforms—expected to improve the deliberative quality of discussions (Sunstein 2001) or civic engagement (Min 2007). However, alongside these optimistic views, early explorations of online deliberation also identified several barriers to achieving true deliberation, including unequal access to technology, lack of representativeness among participants, dominance by vocal individuals (power imbalances), and the prevalence of incivility, unproductive or disrespectful discussions, which can lead to polarization (Kies 2010, Sarmiento & Mendoça 2016). Some scholars have emphasized that the effectiveness of online deliberation depends heavily on its design and the extent to which a digital platform is well-matched to the deliberative task, requiring careful consideration of trade-offs (Davies & Chandler 2012; Esau et al. 2017). While research on online deliberation—particularly in comparison to offline settings—has continued to evolve, now increasingly focusing on digital decision-making platforms (Elstub et al. 2021, Esau et al. 2021, Monnoyer-Smith & Wojcik 2012, Strandberg & Grönlund 2012, 2018, Shin & Rask 2021, Willis et al. 2023), empirical findings remain mixed, emphasizing the influence of contextual and platform-specific factors on the capacity to generate high deliberation quality.

The improvement and professionalization of digital decision-making platforms, combined with the recent development and integration of artificial intelligence (AI), have substantially advanced this line of research. AI is increasingly praised for mitigating certain issues on digital platforms and expanding the participatory possibilities of both in-person and virtual deliberation. It enables real-time automatic moderation, discussion summarization, and enhanced inclusivity through multilingual capabilities (Chirigati 2024, Friess & Eilders 2021, McKinney 2024, Rask & Shin 2024). Yet, these potential improvements come with challenges. For example, Dryzek and Pickering (2017) caution that the commercialization of digital platforms—driven by algorithms designed to maximize engagement rather than deliberation—poses a significant challenge to achieving deliberative quality (and also meaningful outcomes). More broadly, the latest advancements in the platformization of participation raise significant concerns about equity, privacy, and the quality of discourse, which are not yet fully understood, particularly in the context of formal deliberative processes (Sleigh et al., 2024). AI-based technology for deliberation may also generate public reluctance (Jungher & Rauchfleisch 2025).

A third and final debate grapples with digital platforms and the scalability of deliberative processes. Deliberative procedures have traditionally operated within small, controlled settings such as mini-publics, where the number of participants is limited to ensure meaningful dialogue and the equal exchange of arguments. In contrast, digital platforms enable large-scale participation, raising questions about how deliberative principles can be maintained in such expansive and potentially chaotic environments (Shortall et al. 2022). Deliberative scholars have explored the concept of “macro-deliberation” (Parkinson & Mansbridge 2012), in which digital tools serve as intermediaries between small-scale deliberative forums and broader public discourse. In this context, Landemore (2024) argues that integrating AI could be particularly useful in bringing quality deliberation to the masses. Yang and Bachmann (2025) propose actionable frameworks in which algorithmic solutions enhance in-person deliberation with scalable digital voting methods. Yet, broader questions remain about how to design platforms that maintain deliberative integrity while scaling up participation, particularly in relation to the hybrid or blended nature that deliberative processes might—or should—take (Frenkiel & Delorme 2025, Itten & Mouter 2022). More broadly, little is known about how digital platforms can effectively connect small-scale and large-scale participatory processes and, ultimately, enhance their policy impact and public legitimacy.

To conclude, ten years ago, Friess and Eilders (2015) observed that most research on the connection between digital platforms and deliberation focused primarily on either deliberation quality or design and how these two factors influence each other. However, this left a gap in understanding the outcomes of deliberation and how both quality and design shape them. This observation remains relevant today. Furthermore, research rarely examines all three dimensions simultaneously or explores their interactions in a comprehensive manner.

Goals, theoretical framework, and analytical dimensions

This book positions itself at the intersection of digital and deliberative democracy, as well as at the crossroads of these debates. The main overarching question that this book aims to address is how digital platforms can affect the democratic potential of deliberative processes. We argue that, in theory, digital platforms, whatever used as main or complementary channels to make people participate and/or deliberate, should foster the inclusiveness (input), effectiveness (throughput), and impact (output) of deliberative processes, and hence, ultimately, boost their democratic legitimacy. In doing so, this book aims to provide a roadmap for understanding the transformative impact of the recent advancement in digital platforms on deliberative practices and democratic engagement. More specifically, structured into four comprehensive sections, this volume bridges theoretical and empirical insights. By integrating conceptual frameworks, typologies, case-based and comparative studies, quantitative and qualitative insights, and ethical considerations, this book contributes to the growing body of literature on digital and deliberative democracy, while addressing critical gaps in existing research.

Digital platforms and deliberative processes

For this book, digital platforms are understood as online infrastructures designed to facilitate a particular activity (Gillespie 2010). In the context of citizen participation and, more specifically, deliberative procedures, this includes communication, opinion sharing, negotiation, consensus-seeking, and decision-making among citizens, as well as between citizens and government. These platforms may thus support both synchronous and asynchronous exchanges, including, among others, virtual discussion rooms, electronic juries, online polls, e-petitions, and co-production processes (van den Berg 2021).

To ensure consistency across this book, the chapters analyze the use of these digital platforms in the context of structured and formal democratic practices that take place, at least in part, through these new mediums. First, digital platforms must be used in a way that facilitates the participation and deliberation of lay citizens. While these processes may also involve other stakeholders or integrate face-to-face formats, citizen participation must occur online at some stage. Second, deliberative processes must be top-down, initiated by institutions such as governments, parliaments, political parties, or international organizations. Processes launched by citizens themselves or grassroots movements are excluded from the analytical scope, leaving aside less formalized or unstructured forms of deliberation. This criterion ensures empirical consistency, making case studies easier to identify and more closely aligned with traditional decision-making structures. Third, citizen participation must include a discursive component. At some point, there must be a phase where citizens actively engage in discussion and deliberation, either in person or online. In the digital context, this can involve asynchronous written exchanges or synchronous audiovisual interactions. Offline deliberation refers to more traditional methods, such as discussions facilitated and moderated in deliberative mini-publics.

Democratic legitimacy

This book draws upon the classical theory of democratic legitimacy, which offers a framework for evaluating the quality and acceptability of digital deliberative practices by focusing on three interconnected dimensions: input, throughput, and output. Originating from the work of Scharpf (1999), this framework has been widely used to assess the functioning of democratic systems, particularly in complex governance contexts such as the European Union. Here, we apply it to read the democratic potential of digital platforms in the context of deliberative processes. Each dimension highlights a distinct phase of the process and reflects different normative criteria for legitimacy.

Input legitimacy refers to the ability to reflect and represent citizens' profiles, preferences, values, and interests. In this dimension, legitimacy depends on whether digital deliberative processes allow for meaningful citizens' participation and representation. In this dimension, challenges for digital deliberative processes arise regarding the inclusion and representation of citizens who feel excluded or

disconnected from politics, or those with lower digital literacy skills and less access to and involvement in digital technologies.

- *Participation*: digital platforms may encourage equal opportunities to engage in deliberative processes.
- *Representation*: digital platforms may help to fairly represent the diversity of societal preferences in deliberative processes, promoting inclusiveness and avoiding the over/underrepresentation of certain groups present in society.

Throughput legitimacy focuses on the processes through which decisions are made, emphasizing the procedural aspects of governance. This dimension highlights the importance of fair and transparent decision-making processes, regardless of the specific outcomes. It aligns with deliberative democratic ideals, which prioritize the quality of discourse, reason-giving, and procedural fairness. Throughput legitimacy is particularly relevant in deliberative democratic innovations, such as citizens' assemblies, where the procedural quality of engagement is a primary concern. However, it has been criticized for its potential to overemphasize process at the expense of substantive outcomes, raising questions about whether good governance alone is sufficient to ensure legitimacy.

- *Transparency*: digital platforms may promote open and accessible deliberative processes, allowing citizens to understand how decisions are made and by whom.
- *Deliberative quality*: digital platforms may foster reasoned discussion and mutual respect in deliberative processes.

Output legitimacy pertains to the ability to deliver effective, fair, and widely accepted policy outcomes that address citizens' needs and solve societal problems. This dimension is rooted in the notion that democratic governance is ultimately judged by its results. Output legitimacy emphasizes the substantive quality of decisions and the extent to which they align with societal goals and values. Output legitimacy sometimes stands in contrast with Throughput legitimacy, given that the latter may not always result in effective or widely accepted outcomes, e.g., a reasoned and transparent deliberative process may produce policy recommendations that are difficult to translate into actionable policies.

- *Outcome effectiveness and acceptance*: digital platforms may help recommendations made by deliberative processes to address the challenges they are intended to solve and to reach and involve the general public (scalability), thereby increasing public acceptance.
- *Political impact and policy responsiveness*: digital platforms may serve deliberative processes in reaching more political consideration and receiving more policy responses from political institutions and elites.

Scholars such as Schmidt (2013) have emphasized the importance of integrating all three dimensions to achieve a comprehensive framework for democratic

legitimacy. A system that excels in one dimension but fails in others risks undermining its overall legitimacy. For example, a highly inclusive and transparent digital deliberative process (input and throughput legitimacy) may fail to sustain public trust if it produces ineffective or unpopular outcomes (output legitimacy).

The theory of democratic legitimacy provides a useful framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of digital platforms in deliberative procedures. This framework is particularly valuable in a broader context where the legitimacy of traditional political institutions is constantly being contested and redefined, while democratic innovations emerge as potential remedies.

Key findings and take-home messages

This book presents a comprehensive analysis of how digital platforms, AI, and other digital tools are transforming deliberative practices. By structuring the findings through the **input-throughput-output** framework, we can better understand the book's overarching contributions.

Input: inclusivity, accessibility, and participation

Expanding participation through digital platforms: This book highlights how digital platforms have moved beyond consultative functions toward co-decision-making, broadening opportunities for citizen engagement. The typology introduced in Chapter 2 illustrates how digital platforms now serve multiple political functions, from campaigning to budgeting.

Hybrid models improve inclusivity: Several case studies (e.g., Dutch hybrid processes and Luxembourg's Klima Biergerrot) show that blending online consultation with in-person deliberation enhances both reach and representativeness. However, fully digital citizen assemblies are met with skepticism, particularly from citizens supportive of deliberative democracy (Chapter 7).

Challenges of inclusivity in digital deliberation: Digital participation often favors younger, educated, and politically engaged citizens. Some groups remain underrepresented, and multilingual deliberation, particularly in online settings, presents additional challenges (Chapter 6).

Throughput: deliberative quality, process design

Heterogeneity of digital deliberative platforms: A key contribution of this book is its effort to classify and evaluate online deliberation tools based on their deliberative quality (Chapter 3). This allows researchers and practitioners to assess which platforms best facilitate meaningful discourse.

AI as a double-edged sword: AI-driven tools like content moderation, summarization, and opinion mapping can enhance deliberation by mitigating discursive dominance and improving discourse quality. However, ethical concerns about bias, transparency, and democratic values must be addressed (Chapters 8 and 9).

Hybrid models are valued by policymakers: While policymakers appreciate the inclusivity of online consultations, they also recognize that in-person deliberation provides stronger legitimacy and deeper discussion (Chapter 5).

Output: impact on policy and democratic legitimacy

Deliberation outcomes and implementation gaps: Hybrid models tend to produce more actionable recommendations, but implementation discrepancies remain. Some participatory outputs are valued more than others, and bridging deliberative recommendations with policy action remains a challenge (Chapter 5). More broadly, the output aspect remains less explored, and it remains less clear how digital platforms can effectively help with the scalability of deliberative processes.

E-petitions as a deliberative tool: Rather than being passive participation mechanisms, e-petition platforms can foster meaningful debate, but their deliberative quality varies significantly across countries (Chapter 10).

Alternative participatory mechanisms matter: This book broadens the deliberative scope by exploring audience councils in public service media (PSM) (Chapter 11) and children's digital participation (Chapter 12), showing that diverse participatory tools contribute to democratic engagement beyond conventional deliberative settings.

The role of digital platforms in democratic legitimacy: This book consistently explores how digital technologies influence the legitimacy of democratic innovations, emphasizing that while digital tools expand deliberation, they do not inherently guarantee legitimacy—design, inclusivity, and implementation remain key (Chapters 4, 6, 7, and 9).

Public perception matters for legitimacy: Support for digital deliberation depends on citizens' knowledge and initial skepticism. When people are better informed about how digital citizens' assemblies function, their acceptance increases (Chapter 7).

Final takeaways

- 1 **The role of digital platforms in deliberative processes is evolving:** The shift from consultative to co-decision-making digital platforms marks a substantial change in how they can be mobilized in deliberative procedures.
- 2 **Hybrid participation strengthens deliberation:** Combining online and offline participation improves inclusivity and impact of deliberative processes, but implementation gaps persist.
- 3 **AI can enhance deliberation but raises ethical concerns:** AI tools offer solutions for improving and scaling up deliberation but require careful integration to maintain democratic integrity.
- 4 **Digital platforms must be designed for legitimacy:** The successful use of digital platforms in the context of deliberative processes depends on how they can contribute to improving perceived fairness, inclusivity, deliberation quality, and political responsiveness.

Content of this book

This book is structured into four comprehensive sections, each exploring the profound impact of digital platforms on political and deliberative practices. It offers an essential roadmap for understanding how the evolution of digital platforms is affecting deliberative practices and their legitimacy. The following paragraphs introduce the chapters to provide an integrated overview of this book's content and its contribution to the study of digital and deliberative democracy.

The **first section** sets the stage by offering a conceptual and analytical framework for understanding the evolving role of digital platforms in politics, and, more specifically, in deliberative practices. It explores the platformization of political processes and the diversity of deliberative online platforms. In **Chapter 2**, Fabrizio Li Vigni and Stéphanie Wojcik present a typology that categorizes digital platforms based on their political functions, moving beyond technical functionalities like voting or debating. This chapter highlights the shift from the first wave of digital democracy (2000–2010), characterized by consultative and campaigning tools, to the second wave (2010–present), which emphasizes co-decision-making platforms. The proposed typology of 13 political functions provides a comprehensive framework to analyze how these platforms contribute to campaign building, program development, legislating, and budgeting. By focusing on political rather than technical functions, the authors provide a nuanced understanding of the democratic transformations brought about by digital platforms. In **Chapter 3**, Martin King tackles the challenge of conceptualizing the deliberative nature of digital decision-making platforms. This chapter introduces a theoretical model of deliberative elements, designed to capture the heterogeneity of these participatory digital instruments. After this conceptual effort, the author tests it regarding a specific platform (Pol.is), offering insights into how deliberative engagement is supported and evaluated. The discussion explores the legitimacy of deliberative processes facilitated by these platforms and outlines their implications for democratic theory. This conceptual model provides scholars and practitioners with a framework to assess the deliberative nature of digital decision-making platforms and paves the way for comparative research across platforms with shared objectives.

The **second section** examines the practical application of digital platforms in deliberative processes, focusing mostly on one specific form of deliberative mini-publics: citizens' assemblies. In **Chapter 4**, Lisa Verhasselt and Emilien Paulis explore the diverse ways digital tools of all kinds were utilized in 15 European climate assemblies. This chapter analyzes how this use aims to foster engagement, transparency, and collaboration within and outside the assembly while addressing challenges like inclusivity and implementation. By discussing the contribution of digital tools to the input, throughput, and output legitimacy of such democratic procedures applied in the field of climate governance, the authors provide a systematic overview of the interplay between digital technologies and citizens' assemblies, as well as how they can affect their democratic legitimacy. In **Chapter 5**, Niek Mouder, Jelle Turkenburg, Julia Starrenburg, and Anna Mikhaylovskaya investigate the use of hybrid participatory processes in the Netherlands, focusing on three Dutch cases at the local level.

To enhance inclusivity and deliberation, these processes combine on-purpose online consultation of the broader public with offline citizens' assembly grouping a small representative number of inhabitants. The findings reveal that these hybrid participatory models yield more impactful recommendations by leveraging the strengths of both participation scales. Moreover, they found that policymakers value the inclusivity of the broader public and the deliberative rigor of citizens' assemblies. Nonetheless, the authors also highlight some discrepancies in outcome implementation and suggest some design improvements to address these issues. In **Chapter 6**, Lisa Verhasselt examines how the in-person or online format of deliberation affects the perceived effectiveness of multilingual deliberation. Using survey data gathered among the members of the Luxembourg Klima Biergerrot, a case of hybrid and multilingual climate assembly, she identifies a marked improvement in perceptions of multilingual deliberation after the in-person phase, which diminishes during the online phase. The findings underscore the transformative potential of face-to-face deliberation and the challenges posed by online environments, particularly in maintaining inclusivity and linguistic equity. In **Chapter 7**, Emilien Paulis investigates how the public perceives the effectiveness of citizens' assemblies organized entirely via digital platforms. Based on survey data analysis, this chapter shows, first, that some groups usually more represented in online participation (younger, educated, and politically efficacious citizens) show greater support, though appealing to women and low interested citizens as well. Second, citizens favorable to deliberative democracy reject organizing citizens' assemblies fully online. Third, when citizens are informed about how citizens' assemblies can effectively organize deliberation through digital platforms, they become more positive, especially if they were skeptical at first glance. This chapter contributes to debates on the input and throughput dimensions of legitimacy, exploring how digital platforms may affect the inclusivity and effectiveness of deliberative processes.

The **third section** explores the role of AI in enhancing deliberative practices, addressing the opportunities and challenges of integrating AI tools into participatory processes. In **Chapter 8**, Dennis Friess and Carina Weinmann critically examine how AI can address challenges in online deliberation, such as discursive dominance, incivility, and redundant discussions. This chapter employs the input-throughput-output heuristic to evaluate AI applications like content moderation, summarization, and opinion mapping. While highlighting the potential of AI to enhance inclusivity and streamline decision-making, the authors also discuss ethical concerns and limitations, emphasizing the need for careful integration to preserve democratic values. In **Chapter 9**, Alina Östling, Visvaldis Valtenbergs, and Velta Skolmeistere present an empirical analysis of AI-powered deliberative platforms. This chapter examines how AI enhances or undermines democratic legitimacy by influencing discourse quality and decision-making. By reviewing existing platforms, the authors provide a balanced perspective on the opportunities and risks associated with AI and deliberation.

The **fourth section** broadens the discussion by exploring alternative deliberative platforms and contexts, including online petition systems, PSM, political parties, and children's participation in online consultations. In **Chapter 10**, Nino Sharashidze

tries to redefine e-petition systems as deliberative tools rather than passive participatory mechanisms. By analyzing 17 national e-petition platforms, this chapter identifies their potential for fostering inclusive and thoughtful exchanges among citizens, policymakers, and stakeholders. The findings reveal significant variations in deliberative potential across countries, with Estonia and Germany leading in integration and inclusivity. This chapter highlights best practices for leveraging e-petitions to enhance deliberation and public engagement. In **Chapter 11**, Raphaël Kies and Stéphanie Lukasik explore audience councils as a means of fostering dialogue between PSM and citizens. This chapter compares four European cases, examining their inclusivity, legal framework, and organizational structure. By identifying best practices and the place that may be given to digital decision-making platforms, the authors propose strategies for strengthening participatory and deliberative elements within PSM to better reflect public interests. In **Chapter 12**, Daniella Zlotnik Raz and Shulamit Almog focus on children's participation in online consultations and deliberations commissioned by international organizations, emphasizing their right to be heard in matters affecting their lives. This chapter examines how digital platforms can empower children as deliberators, highlighting their unique perspectives and challenges. Practical principles for designing inclusive and effective deliberation through digital platforms are proposed, ensuring that children's voices are integrated into decision-making processes. In **Chapter 13**, Istvan Miskolczy and Sergiu Gherghina explore how Hungarian opposition party elites perceive digital participatory tools. Despite their growing prominence in politics, party elites remain skeptical about online participation, seeing it as a necessary but limited response to external pressures like COVID-19. They favor traditional, in-person engagement and question the inclusivity, security, and democratic value of digital tools. The findings reveal a paradox: even under an authoritarian-leaning government, opposition parties cling to conventional structures, using digital participation mainly as a reactive and instrumental strategy.

Finally, in the concluding chapter, **Chapter 14**, John Gastil and Elisa Vogel draw lessons from this edited volume. They critically reflect on the transformative potential of digital platforms in enhancing deliberative processes and their democratic legitimacy, while highlighting the challenges and trade-offs involved. More specifically, they argue that digital innovation can play a crucial role in revitalizing democracy by fostering new forms of interaction between citizens and policymakers. It identifies key challenges to public deliberation alongside potential drivers of democratic renewal. The authors link these dynamics to the democratic innovations discussed throughout this book and explore how alternative digital designs could more effectively support democratic revitalization.

By bridging theoretical debates with empirical insights, this book offers a comprehensive guide for academics, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to navigate the intersectional complexities of deliberative processes in the time of "platformization." From typologies and conceptual models to case studies and ethical considerations, this volume equips readers with the knowledge to critically engage with and contribute to the evolving landscape of participatory and deliberative practices, under the pressure of rapid digital transformation and advances that frequently redistribute the cards and opportunities.

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