

From Web 2.0 Enthusiasm to Disillusionment with Platformization Ten Years of Public Discussions in Election Campaigns¹

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Abstract: This essay reflects on the results of a decade-long study of public dialogues between political elites and citizens during election campaigns in Jalisco, Mexico, in the context of the expansion of Web 2.0 and the subsequent platformization of political communication. It empirically examines how candidates and parties used platforms such as Facebook and Twitter between 2012 and 2021 in a context that attributed democratizing potential to digital technologies. It finds that communication practices were predominantly guided by a central value: the telos of winning the election. This value shaped unidirectional, vertical, and self-referential strategies, and limited the possibilities for dialogue and public deliberation. The text challenges the cyber-optimistic assumptions that have permeated much of the academic research on digital political communication and proposes a critical agenda that incorporates a historical perspective, epistemological scrutiny, and an analysis of the materiality and infrastructure of communication.

The history of this work began in a historical context different from the present one. Twenty years ago, the academic world was discussing the emergence of Web 2.0, and an optimistic perspective prevailed regarding the transformations that the use of these technologies would bring to humanity. At that time, the expansion and development of the internet were conceived as a driver of change across multiple social dimensions. My focus was on studying the ways in which political elites began to use Web 2.0—particularly digital microblogging platforms, to communicate directly with citizens in electoral contexts.

In 2004, Facebook began operating; in 2005, YouTube; and in 2006, Twitter (now X). This accelerated the development of a variety of digital platforms dedicated, among other things, to the creation of social networks in digital environments. The impact of these technologies on the political world was enormous, and we are still trying to gauge and assess their effects. A turning point that shaped public and academic debates was Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign. The Democratic candidate and his party utilized digital technologies in a way that was unprecedented at the time (Ball, 2012; Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Issenberg, 2012). From that point on, various politicians and campaigns around the world sought to replicate his strategy, generating great anticipation regarding the possibilities of Web 2.0, whose design and architecture promised collaboration and horizontal communication between political elites and citizens.

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In that historical context of the early 21st century, marked by strong optimism regarding the relationship between technology and politics—as well as in other economic, legal, social, and cultural spheres—many analysts and scholars, including myself, became enthusiastic—in some cases uncritically—about the democratizing possibilities these technologies seemed to open up for the political arena. That moment coincided with a period in which I was focused on understanding how collective problems and their possible solutions were identified through so-called “public dialogues” between politicians and citizens (Acosta García et al., 2014; Larrosa-Fuentes, 2012). I undertook a study of digital communication in the electoral campaigns in Jalisco (Mexico) during the 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021 elections, with the aim of analyzing the communicative practices that facilitated the connection between political elites and citizens.

The conclusion of this research was that dialogues between political elites and citizens were scarce. This conclusion is grounded in the normative perspective of republican democracy (Habermas, 1985a, 1985b, 2006), from which deliberation is conceived as a mechanism for building political knowledge and finding collective solutions to public problems (Dewey, 1927). Added to this is the fact that, more than a decade after the start of the first research project in 2012, the conclusion of this project comes at a radically different historical moment. In a pendulum swing, we have moved from the expectation that digital technologies would revolutionize political life to a present marked by an epistemic crisis of great magnitude, characterized by an environment saturated with disinformation, propaganda, and hate speech (W. L. Bennett and Livingston, 2025; Habermas, 2022)—the polar opposite of the transformative promise of Web 2.0 (O’Reilly, 2005).

This text serves a dual purpose: first, to summarize the results of a research project in the field of communication. Although the study is limited to a local context such as Jalisco, its findings allow for a “logical generalization” (Luker, 2010) that contributes to an understanding of general features of communicative practices between political elites and citizens in other parts of the country. While each state has its own unique historical and political contexts, they also share characteristics that allow for drawing parallels and, in certain cases, making generalizations about the use of Web 2.0 to foster public dialogue.

The second objective is to reflect, from a sociocultural perspective, on the findings of this research and, in particular, its blind spots. Upon reexamining the work over time, the presence of a cyber-optimistic and pro-technology bias becomes evident. This bias, as with other ideological biases, led numerous studies to assume that technology, in and of itself, would change the world, and to overlook the material and symbolic inequalities that shape access to public communication. This bias was present in some of my own work, and I believe that acknowledging it can be useful for the development of new research programs aimed at critically examining the role of technology in contemporary political communication practices.

The telos of winning the election as a central value in electoral communication

One of the most important lessons from this research, from a methodological perspective, was understanding the importance of studying the values that guide communicative practices. In the various studies I conducted, I focused on observing how local candidates and their

teams used various digital platforms to address, interact with, and engage in dialogue with citizens in the context of election campaigns. Values refer to the way in which we socially judge our environment: what is beautiful and what is ugly, what is permitted and what is prohibited, what is desirable and what is undesirable (Guest, 2016, p. 70; Halman, 2007). In this case, values function as a code that structure political communication practices, much like how software is programmed using specific code. In other words, values constitute the DNA of communicative practices, and from this DNA emerge the norms, rules, and power relations that structure social processes at the meso and macro levels. The political elites' use of digital platforms was thus programmed and guided by very specific values and criteria.

I can point out that the most important objective of the campaigns I observed was to win the election, which aligns with previous academic work (Stromer-Galley, 2014). The value that programmed this objective was electoral success; that is, winning the election is what is good and desirable. This idea is central because it shapes most communication practices in an election campaign. I propose naming this value the *winning-the-election telos*. The conceptualization of telos in Greek philosophy—understood as the end or purpose of any human practice or action—offers a framework for understanding the ways in which electoral communication practices are shaped. From this perspective—and as I will explore in greater depth later—the “telos of winning the election” was, on very few occasions, compatible with values aimed at promoting public conversation and deliberation.

The conclusions of the axiological analysis allow us to identify the main ways in which candidates used digital platforms. All the candidates I observed over the years used these platforms to promote branding practices aimed at building their image and name recognition. In these processes, political campaigns published transmedia content about the candidates' life stories, including their biographies and family backgrounds. They also used the platforms to disseminate political proposals through the distribution of audiovisual spots, infographics, or links to their websites. Favorable news articles, press releases, and campaign-generated news coverage were also shared.

These practices reflect specific media logics, in which a broadcast-style content distribution strategy predominated—one that was a) unidirectional, b) vertical, and c) self-referential—traits very different from the possibilities promised by the promoters of Web 2.0 under values such as horizontality, collaboration, and diversity. During these years, it was common for candidates to share their real-time location and daily schedule, informing their followers when they were about to appear on a media outlet for a radio or television interview, when they were meeting with other politicians or leaders, or when they were beginning a tour of specific neighborhoods or towns. There was a flow of communication that went from one node—the candidate—to many—the citizens—following the unidirectional logic of media such as newspapers, radio, or television, typical of mass communication models.

The strategies I observed were also characterized by a top-down use of digital platforms. This meant that political communication practices were designed and controlled by political elites, which limited the promotion of co-design and horizontal citizen participation. As I documented in my research, most of the interaction that candidates generated with users stemmed from content produced by the campaign itself. On Facebook, for example, citizens interacted with candidates' posts; however, there were no reciprocal dynamics in which

candidates sought to engage with citizens' ideas and practices. Conceptually, this implies that the campaigns were not designed to allow candidates to interact with accounts and content created by people outside the political elite. In this context, communicative power resided primarily with the candidates and their campaign teams.

Another characteristic was the self-referential nature of communication practices. This meant that candidates and parties focused almost exclusively on themselves and their proposals, using the platforms to talk about their achievements and promises. These spaces were rarely used to debate with other candidates or parties, or to discuss policy issues of public interest. When journalistic pieces were referenced, they were generally news articles or interviews focused on the candidates themselves. Information on issues of public importance was not disseminated, nor were journalistic pieces critical of their opponents shared. The strategy consisted of constructing a self-referential world that would serve as a foundation for brand positioning, facilitate the general dissemination of campaign proposals, and promote the expansion of their territorial reach through rallies, meetings with citizens, and media appearances—whether in interviews or through mentions of their own campaigns.

The unidirectionality, verticality, and self-referentiality that I identified in the design of these strategies characterized the use of digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter during the election campaigns analyzed. It was these uses of the platforms—and not the technologies themselves—that limited the ability of citizens and, more broadly, of internet users to influence public discourse and dialogue and, thereby, to actively participate in public communication processes. The campaigns thus reinforced a power structure present in communicative and political practices within digital platforms, but also outside of them, where political elites maintain control over the flow of information and the campaign narrative.

This section highlights a key lesson learned from the research project. The initial approach to the study was based on a fundamental error: the assumption that technologies, by themselves, would transform communication practices. The key, in conceptual and methodological terms, lies in focusing not only on technologies, but also on the strategic ways in which political actors use them and, taking a step back, on the values and criteria upon which these technologies were designed (Howard, 2005). The use of technology is structured and guided by political values, and in the case of an election campaign, the most relevant value is the goal of winning the election. In other words, in an election—with few exceptions—communication strategies are geared toward winning a political office, not toward fostering interaction, dialogue, or deliberation between political elites and citizens.

The Platformization of Campaigns: Between Controlled Interaction and Public Dialogue

Just as television transformed political campaigns during the 1960s, digital platforms in the second decade of the 21st century further reshaped the ways in which communication structures the political sphere. This research project allowed me not only to study the interactions between political elites and citizens but also to closely observe, from a glocal perspective, the macro-process of the platformization of the political-electoral world.

There is still no consensus on how to define and understand the process of platformization. In general terms, this concept refers to the processes through which digital platforms have influenced and altered political, economic, social, and cultural life—and, in this case, the way electoral campaigns are organized. In my work, I use the concept of “platform”—without the adjective “digital”—to refer to complex material and symbolic assemblages in which multiple actors and agents converge and interact, and where communication functions as the constitutive process that articulates these elements. A platform brings together technology companies and users, national legal frameworks and internal company regulations, as well as memes, news, and other circulating content.

When I speak of “digital platforms”—with the adjective explicitly included—I am referring to the large technology companies that own digital infrastructure and software and tend to be dominant actors within these assemblages, although they are neither the only actors nor the only ones wielding power. This infrastructure and software enable interaction among different actors—in this case, political parties, candidates, and citizens—and, in the process, “come to host public information, organize access to it, and create new formats for it” (Kleis Nielsen and Ganter, 2017: 13), “through the systematic collection of information, algorithmic processing, monetization, and the circulation of data” (Poell et al., 2019: 3).

Based on these ideas, two clarifications are in order. The first is that in this essay I do not use the terms “social networks” or “social media” to refer to Facebook, X, or YouTube. The term I use—and which I propose along with other authors—is “digital platforms,” in accordance with the definition provided in the previous paragraph.

The second distinction relates to the role played by digital platforms. During a campaign, candidates and parties seek to build social networks to disseminate information about their proposals, persuade the public, and mobilize the vote. In the conceptual framework I propose, social networks are sets of relationships between actors and agents that can be established through face-to-face or technology-mediated communicative practices. Therefore, it is more accurate to state that, during an election campaign, digital platforms provide mechanisms for creating and managing interactions among parties, candidates, and citizens. In other words, digital platforms produce and manage digital social networks that are then capitalized upon by political actors. From this perspective, Facebook and Twitter are platforms dedicated to creating and managing social networks; that is, they are not the networks themselves.

What forms did platform-mediated interactions between political elites and citizens take during the campaigns observed? The most common practice was informal and fleeting small talk. The candidates—or those managing their accounts—engaged in very simple exchanges with users. It was common for them to respond to greetings, good wishes, or cheers expressed through text messages or images such as memes. These responses were typically brief and generic. In some cases, they included invitations to support the candidate, follow them on other platforms, attend a rally, or watch an interview on radio, television, or digital media. The candidates sought to present themselves as ordinary people and, paradoxically, to mimic the practices of the average user. This type of interaction had the effect of depoliticizing the campaigns, in which the candidate’s day-to-day life took on greater relevance than their political proposals.

I also identified a type of interaction aimed at responding to negative information and campaigns, which I categorized as “dirty war” and “negative confrontations.” In the 2012 and 2015 election campaigns, it was common for candidates and their teams to respond to critical comments and posts. In these exchanges, they communicated with users who rebuked the candidates on political issues, openly attacked them, or asked about dirty-war tactics. The campaigns sought to respond to mentions related to misinformation and offered resources to refute it. In response to a corruption scandal, for example, a candidate might post a link to a news article refuting the accusation; in response to a question about the absence of a certain issue in the campaign, they might publish an explanatory text or video. However, many of these reactions were aimed at debunking false information rather than addressing well-founded criticisms that were not based on misinformation.

In the 2018 and 2021 elections, candidates and their teams stopped responding to critical comments. There are various reasons that may explain this behavior; however, one of the most significant, observed in the research, was related to algorithmic changes. During this period, the algorithms governing digital platforms changed constantly, thereby transforming political communication practices. In particular, the way interactions appeared on screen changed, especially on Facebook. During the 2018 and 2021 elections, the algorithm made visible the comments to which candidates responded; if a candidate responded to the 100th comment on a post, that comment would be prominently displayed on their wall.

Once campaign teams understood this logic, they chose to engage only with positive comments and ignore the negative ones. This behavior created a dynamic in which favorable comments gained greater visibility, while negative ones were relegated to the bottom of the conversations. As a result, the campaigns decided to stop responding to negative comments or those linked to misinformation—since doing so would amplify their visibility—and instead prioritized interacting with greetings and cheers (small talk). At this point, the telos of winning the election becomes clear: the value that shaped communication practices was electoral success, not values such as rationality, inclusion, or transparency—which are characteristic of public deliberation.

I also identified cases of highly exceptional public dialogues. For a communicative practice to be considered a public dialogue, it had to meet two conditions. The first was thematic and referred to the discussion of public policy issues or problems relevant to society or, at least, to a specific community: security, public education, or drinking water and garbage collection services. The second was formal and concerned the deliberate design of communicative practices oriented toward dialogue or deliberation, structured by rules that allowed for an orderly progression.

Enrique Alfaro Ramírez ran as a candidate in the 2012, 2015, and 2018 elections. Throughout his political career, he was known for placing central importance on political communication and for forming a working group that supported him for more than fifteen years, both during campaigns and while holding public office (Larrosa-Fuentes, 2021). In the 2012 election, he lost the race for state governor but ran a strong campaign on digital platforms that included promoting public dialogues. During that campaign, Alfaro and his team created a website and an app called “Guardián Electoral” (Electoral Guardian), through which they collected evidence of illegal practices such as disinformation, bribes to election officials, and the

offering of money or gifts in exchange for votes. On his Facebook page, the candidate promoted the use of this tool, and various citizens interacted with him, discussing electoral irregularities and providing evidence of such practices.

Another example of public dialogue emerged during the 2015 midterm campaigns. In that election cycle, a candidate launched an initiative called “#PregúntaleAPetersen” (#AskPetersen)” in which, one day a week, he received questions from citizens via Facebook and Twitter and subsequently answered each one through videos. This initiative allowed for direct interaction with voters on public policy issues. Since it was a mayoral election in Guadalajara and voter turnout was not particularly high, the candidate and his team did not face significant difficulties in managing this initiative.

The third case identified was an initiative led by Miguel Castro, the PRI candidate for governor of Jalisco in the 2018 elections. The campaign, called “#TuDecides,” consisted of posing open-ended questions to voters to gather their opinions, with a promise to compile the responses and use them in the implementation of public policies. Among the questions raised were: What should be done about speed camera tickets in Jalisco? And what actions should be taken to eradicate gender-based violence in the state? The candidate posed twelve questions during the campaign but did not compile the responses, despite active participation from users.

A common thread in the three identified cases of public dialogues is that the candidates who implemented these strategies were trailing in the polls and did not win the election. The frontrunners ran conservative campaigns and avoided exposing themselves to public dialogue and scrutiny, as these strategies do not contribute to winning an election. In contrast, those seeking to catch up to the frontrunner experimented with various strategies, including public dialogues, with the expectation of increasing their vote share. In all cases—whether candidates incorporated public dialogues or not—the campaigns were aligned with the goal of winning the election and did not demonstrate a genuine intention to conceive of the campaigns as spaces for deliberation and the generation of public knowledge about community issues.

Toward a Critical Research Agenda in Digital Political Communication

There are three ideas I consider relevant for future research on political communication, deliberative democracy, and technology. The first involves framing research projects within a temporal context and conceiving of communication as a set of historical and socially situated practices. This helps us understand that the uses of technology in an election campaign of the 1970s are radically different from those analyzed in this essay.

Upon reviewing studies on electoral communication and digital platforms published over the past twenty years, it is evident that many have focused on studying interactions on a platform during an election period, without analyzing the origins or development of the technology in question. Very few studies have paused to consider the implications of the fact that a platform like Facebook—which originated as a technology designed to rank the “most attractive” people at an elite university in the United States—has become a central component of the electoral public sphere. Something similar occurred with Twitter, now X: a platform that, in

its beginnings was used to post everyday thoughts eventually transformed into a key communication network for what is known in Mexico as the “red circle.”

From the perspective of political economy, these studies also tend to overlook a fundamental aspect: media ownership—in this case, platform ownership. In the campaigns analyzed, the dominant platforms were Facebook and X. It is striking how little attention has been paid to the fact that two U.S. companies control the technological infrastructure for a significant portion of political campaigns online. If, during the years when Mexican broadcasting wielded the greatest influence, the television duopoly formed by Televisa and TV Azteca was criticized, it is surprising that today the dominant and monopolistic role these companies play in a local election campaign is not examined with the same intensity.

Complementing this line of analysis is the need to incorporate what Bourdieu (1999) termed “epistemological vigilance.” This involves systematically revisiting the history and critical studies of technology, which identify recurring patterns: the emergence of a new medium tends to flood public discourse with optimism and, almost parallel, gives rise to moral panics and apocalyptic views. As I noted earlier, during the 1990s and the early years of the 21st century, academic discourse was permeated by a techno-optimism that predicted—as we now know, erroneously—that digital technology would positively transform social relations and democratize politics. Historical analysis allows us to nuance these positions, overcome the false dilemma between apocalyptic and integrated perspectives, and propose a more critical view of contemporary debates such as the one currently sparked by artificial intelligence (Usher, 2025).

Epistemological vigilance must also warn against the symbolic domination exercised by powerful actors, such as transnational corporations or certain states. In the case analyzed, the cyber-optimism surrounding Web 2.0 was not accidental: it was articulated through discourses and narratives aimed at constructing an imagined order in which, once again, technology promised to emancipate human beings. Two decades later, we observe a high degree of concentration, centralization, and monopolization of Web 2.0 production in a specific region of the world: Silicon Valley. These narratives not only circulated in the media and political spheres but also became embedded in academic research, giving rise to naive questions and a pro-technology bias that uncritically assumed that Web 2.0 would transform political relations.

The second idea aims to dispel naive views about the agency of technology. Academic and journalistic articles frequently assert that technology has transformed politics and the way we communicate. It is important to be precise: technology does not have agency in and of itself. Action—and therefore agency—emerges from the interaction between human beings and objects, between agents and actants, as Latour (2005) explained; or even from the friction between a “confederation of objects” (J. Bennett, 2010: 103). This distinction is key to avoiding a technological determinism that leads us to believe that technology alone will solve political problems.

Technology can be understood, in general terms, as a tool that expands the possibilities of human action. In the case at hand, the central work is communicative—that which contributes to constituting and structuring the world of politics. Technology makes it possible to control

time and space, transmit information to large audiences, and coordinate collective actions, as occurs during election periods.

At this point, it is worth revisiting the issue of values. Technologies are designed by human beings who possess particular ways of understanding and observing the world, and those values tend to be incorporated into the artifacts they create. In the field of political communication, various authors have shown that technology responds to specific political values and that these influence the ways in which people use communication during electoral processes (Howard, 2005).

Values are not generated solely by those who design technology, but also by those who use it. To assume that designers' values are automatically transferred to political communication practices is tantamount to reproducing communication models similar to the pseudo-theories of the hypodermic needle or the magic bullet, which posited a direct and unmediated transfer of information and propaganda from political elites to citizens. Decades of research have shown that people have agency in the processes of media consumption, and the same is true of technology use. Web 2.0 users have demonstrated that these technologies can also be used to resist power; the key lies in how they are used.

The research conducted leads to a clear conclusion: what matters is not the technology itself, but the way it is designed and, above all, the way in which actors use it strategically. In this sense, the dominant value—both in platform design and in political communication practices—was the telos of winning the election. This electoral logic limited the possibility of genuine dialogue and deliberative processes. Transforming this scenario requires promoting other values that prioritize participation, meaningful interaction, and the collective construction of public debate—and that, consequently, redefine the technological and praxeological design of electoral communication.

The third idea relates to the central role that content analysis has come to play in research on electoral communication and digital platforms. Studies typically rely on the collection and analysis of messages circulating on Facebook, X, or Instagram. Although this technique is valuable, it is insufficient for addressing the problems and research topics with greater complexity.

The main limitation of content analysis—whether automated or not, quantitative or qualitative—is that it only allows for inferences about the processes of production, circulation, and consumption of messages. Based on a text, hypotheses can be formulated about the conditions under which campaign messages are produced or about their possible interpretation by different audiences, but it is not possible to go much further. A text is, ultimately, the crystallization of a communicative practice.

It is necessary to expand the methodological repertoire for the study of political communication, incorporating surveys, experiments, and computational analyses, as well as interviews and ethnographic approaches. The mediatization and platformization of political communication—and the possibilities for public deliberation—require not only an understanding of the texts resulting from interactions between political elites and citizens, but also real-time observation, through both in-person and digital methods, of how these

practices unfold and how the actors themselves reflect on their communicative activities. These processes cannot be analyzed exclusively on the basis of tweets or Facebook posts.

The tendency to focus solely on texts has also led to a prioritization of discursive and symbolic analysis of communication, neglecting its material dimension. In this essay, I highlight the lack of critical examination of the material conditions that enable or restrict public dialogues and, consequently, determine who can—and who cannot—participate in these practices.

To counteract this bias, I propose advancing theories on the materiality of political communication. Every practice or system of political communication requires a material infrastructure to function. This can be as limited as a group of people who agree to collect trash in their community, or as broad as a country with millions of inhabitants electing its president. In both cases, political communication depends on specific material conditions. In the first example, bodies capable of interpersonal interaction are required; in the second, in addition to bodies, techno-materialities such as cell phones, radios, televisions, and other devices are necessary.

Infrastructure can thus be understood as a network of materialities that, by operating together, enable political communication systems to function. In an electoral communication system deployed through digital platforms, this infrastructure consists of three elements: materialities that enable the operation of the internet—satellites, networks, and servers—connection devices—phones, computers, and screens—and human bodies—politicians, public servants, candidates, authorities, journalists, and citizens.

One way to analyze these infrastructures is to employ normative theoretical frameworks that allow for the evaluation of the material conditions necessary for the development of communicative practices. From the perspective of deliberative or republican democracy, the assembly and use of this infrastructure should meet two criteria. The first is to enable universal access or connectivity for members of a community; the second is to ensure that all its components are properly configured to integrate into the political communication system. These criteria relate to what is referred to in academic and public policy circles as digital divides. According to the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE), a divide is a “break or irregular opening, especially in a wall or rampart.” If we conceive of the community as a wall, these divides represent openings that fragment it and generate inequalities in the production, circulation, and consumption of communication. The digital divide thus refers to inequalities in access to and use of the resources necessary to participate in political communication systems.

One such gap manifests itself in digital connectivity. After a decade of observation, a quarter of Jalisco’s population still lacks internet access, and, among those who do have access, a significant percentage lacks a broadband connection. In an ideal democratic system, it is essential to have an infrastructure that guarantees access to the communication network for all members of the community, especially during election periods. Connection enables inclusion; disconnection leads to exclusion.

Another significant gap relates to access to and use of digital devices. Some people have phones, tablets, or computers to connect, while others do not. A person may have internet access—for example, through a public Wi-Fi service—but without a device, they cannot connect. During my years of observing electoral processes, I have found that there are still people without the necessary devices to access the internet, even in relatively prosperous municipalities such as Zapopan. Paradoxically, in cities like Guadalajara, there are enough devices for the entire population to be connected; however, in practice, some people own multiple devices while others have none. This situation highlights an inequality in the distribution of the material resources essential for communication and, consequently, for participating in public dialogues during elections.

Finally, a third gap concerns the programming of human bodies. To participate in public dialogues, it is not enough to have access to the internet or to own a device; bodies must also possess the knowledge and skills to use digital media. The acquisition of these competencies depends on the historical moment and social context in which bodies are formed, as well as on their interactions with other bodies. The literature has shown that factors such as gender, ethnicity, and class directly influence levels of media literacy, which either enable—or prevent—the integration of bodies into this material assemblage.

The Fallacy of Technological Reduction

The most significant conclusion of this research was that Web 2.0 and the digital platforms that emerged from it did not “democratize” communication practices between political elites and citizens—especially if by democratization we mean communicative practices guided by values such as equity, inclusion, civility, rationality, and an epistemic commitment to the construction of public knowledge. Just as with other large-scale technological transformations—such as the printing press, electronic media, and, more recently, artificial intelligence—the emergence of Web 2.0 transformed political communication through processes of mediatization and platformization, but at the same time reproduced and reinforced inequalities and inequities in the distribution and concentration of communicative resources.

This highlights a fundamental fallacy: a political problem has been erroneously framed as a purely technological issue. Technology, in and of itself, did not have a positive impact on electoral communication. It is a political problem because technology, as a resource, can be used to foster a deliberative democracy, just as the printing press, radio, or television have been employed for that purpose. However, the most powerful actors, who control contemporary communication systems, have shown no interest in democratizing electoral processes.

Among political elites, the focus is on winning the election, not on fostering deliberative processes aimed at identifying and resolving public problems. In the case of digital platforms—understood as technology companies—these are actors that profit from the centralization of attention, visibility, and information regarding political actors (Fuchs, 2024: 149). As long as the communication-electoral system continues to be governed by specific values and rules—and this is not unique to Mexico—it will be difficult to establish deliberative processes that strengthen the public sphere and collective discourse.

The relationships between political elites and citizens—whether communicative or not— will continue to be a relevant topic of research. In closing this paper, I pose some questions that may guide future lines of research: What alternative values could be incorporated into platform design and political communication strategies? How can we design models of digital interaction that do not merely reproduce the logic of electoral competition but instead foster public dialogue in a more substantive way? What experiences in other contexts can serve as a reference for rethinking the relationship between technology, values, and political communication? What are the implications of the fact that the technologies—platforms and algorithms—used in Mexico were designed in other countries? Would it be possible and desirable to invest in our own technological designs that enable other forms of political communication?

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