

From Human Sovereignty to Algorithmic Sovereignty: The Political Challenge of the Digital Age

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence amplifies contemporary crises by accelerating their dynamics, fragmenting democratic discourse, and weakening state control. This new technology is therefore a decisive factor in the uncontrollability of democracies, due to its speed, opacity, and the transfer of power to private actors. Through an analysis of theories of sovereignty, technological power and algorithmic governance, this essay examines how democracies can regain their capacity for action through a repoliticization of the subject, transparency, and collective deliberation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence and Democracy; Uncontrollability; Digital Revolution; Politicization; Digital Power; Crisis

The challenge posed by artificial intelligence to our democracies must be examined not as a simple technological issue but as a political catalyst immersed in an era facing numerous crises. Internal problems such as security, ecological, and socioeconomic disruptions are thus subject to the hyper-speed and instability of a crisis of democratic control caused by the omnipresence of these new technological tools.

Artificial intelligence exacerbates crises and destabilizes democracies, particularly through the speed and empowerment to which our societies are now subject. Decision-making processes and information flows now take much less time than political deliberation and high-quality democratic regulation (Berns and Rouvroy 2013). Furthermore, the opacity and complexity of algorithms are beyond the understanding of the general public (Pasquale 2015). Excessive personalization of content via algorithms fragments political discourse and weakens collective debate (Sunstein 2017).

As this climate of instability solidifies, a collective existential crisis can lead individuals to withdraw into themselves, identifying the “Other” as the cause of these problems. The risk then is that populist demagogues will multiply, feeding on the fears and uncertainty of the population to undermine democratic institutions (Reich 1993).

This fragility is reinforced by the digital revolution. While social media already dominated public and private spaces, the rise of artificial intelligence has multiplied the amount of information to which citizens are exposed at a colossal rate. Populists, who are experts at staging events, take advantage of this overabundance to saturate collective attention and divert political debate toward

spectacle (Toffler 1970). The media, caught up in the incessant flow of news, no longer have the time to analyze information. In this context of overstimulation, fake news and extreme discourse are becoming commonplace, gradually widening the Overton window.

A key element in addressing these multiple contemporary challenges is sovereignty, understood here—drawing on Carl Schmitt (1922) and Michel Foucault (2004)—as the political community's capacity to regulate in the name of collective autonomy. Artificial intelligence is redefining this concept by establishing itself as the decision-maker and controller. Algorithms determine what is visible or not, relevant or legitimate in a new depoliticized public space. This erosion of control transforms traditional sovereignty into what Asma Mhalla terms *dilévatan*: a hybrid form of power where the state and digital companies govern jointly through data and algorithms (Mhalla 2025, 137).

It is essential to repoliticize the subject and place artificial intelligence at the heart of democratic debate to face the uncontrollability caused by the speed, opacity, and fragmentation produced by algorithms.

This means making its challenges understandable to citizens, strengthening digital education, ensuring the transparency of algorithms, and holding public and private actors accountable. Repoliticizing also means restoring the role of the state to ensure that innovation serves the public interest and maintains pluralistic debate. Finally, it requires the mobilization of citizens, who can question the use of artificial intelligence, transforming this challenge into an opportunity to strengthen democracy and collective sovereignty.

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