

WEBINAR



What Digital Futures Do We (Not) Want?

26 May 2026

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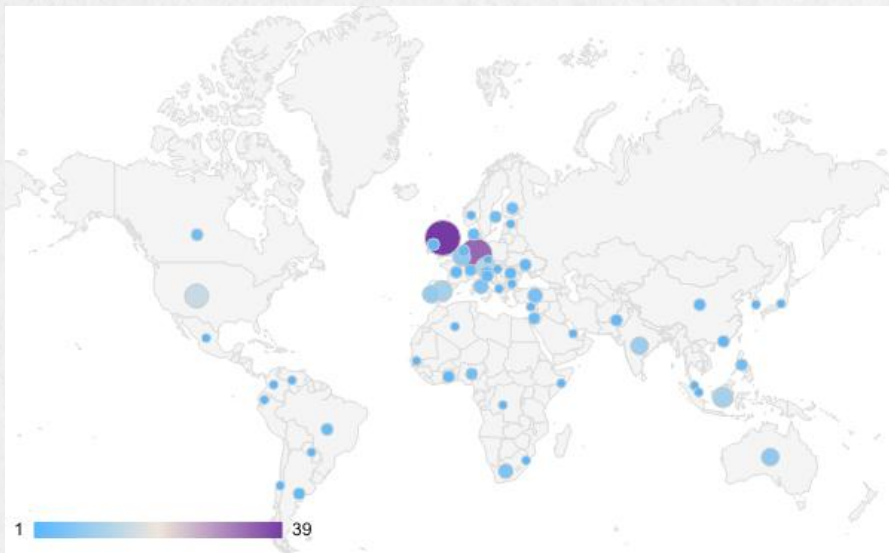
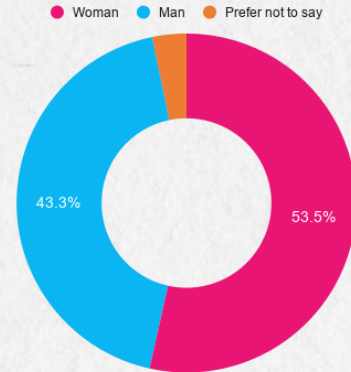
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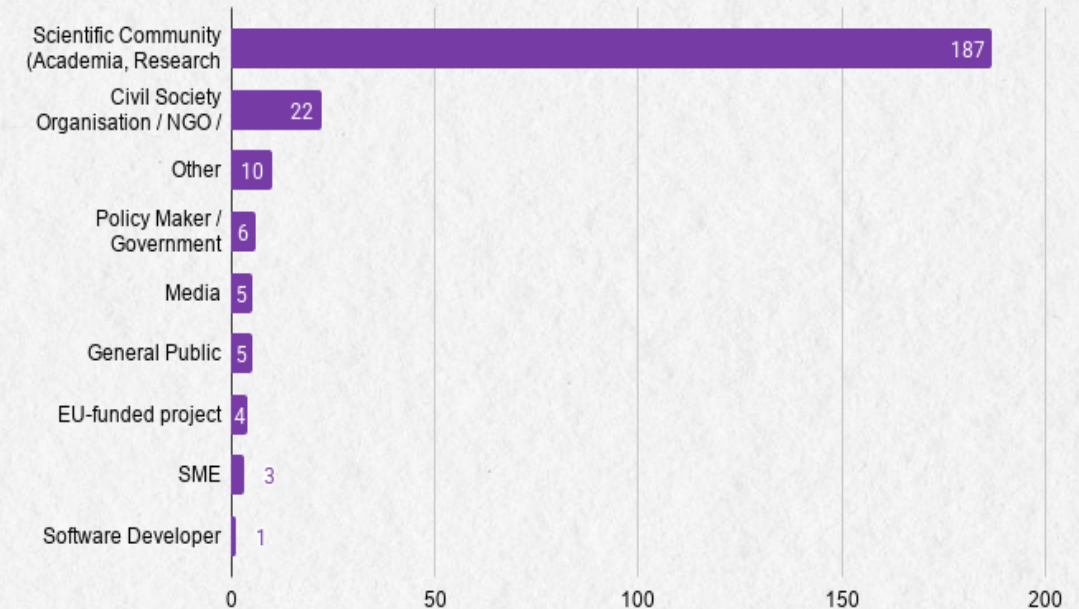
It's also a space to introduce yourself and say hi 🙋

270 registrants from
57 countries




TOP 9 countries:


UK (39)
Germany (34)
US (15)
Austria (13)
Indonesia (11)
Spain (11)
India (10)
Portugal (9)
Belgium (9)



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Download the White Paper: The Futures of Digital Democracy



10.5281/zenodo.17747936



Agenda

- 🕒 10:00-10:05 **Welcome and Introduction,**
Gabriela Rogowska (Trust-IT Services)
- 🕒 10:05-10:15 **The Futures of Digital Society: Four Scenarios**
Kevin Friesch (Paderborn University)
- 🕒 10:15-10:25 **The Futures of Digital Democracy Survey's Methodology**
Joel Museba (Paderborn University)
- 🕒 10:25-10:45 **The Futures of Digital Democracy Survey (FDDS): Results and Policy Implications**
prof. Christian Fuchs (Paderborn University)
- 🕒 10:45-11:30 **Q&A and discussion**





Thank you!
Let's keep in touch.
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Kevin Friesch: The Futures of Digital Society: Theoretical Foundations



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Structure

- Theoretical Background
- Six Models of (Digital) Democracy
- Four Future Scenarios of Digital Democracy
- Bibliography

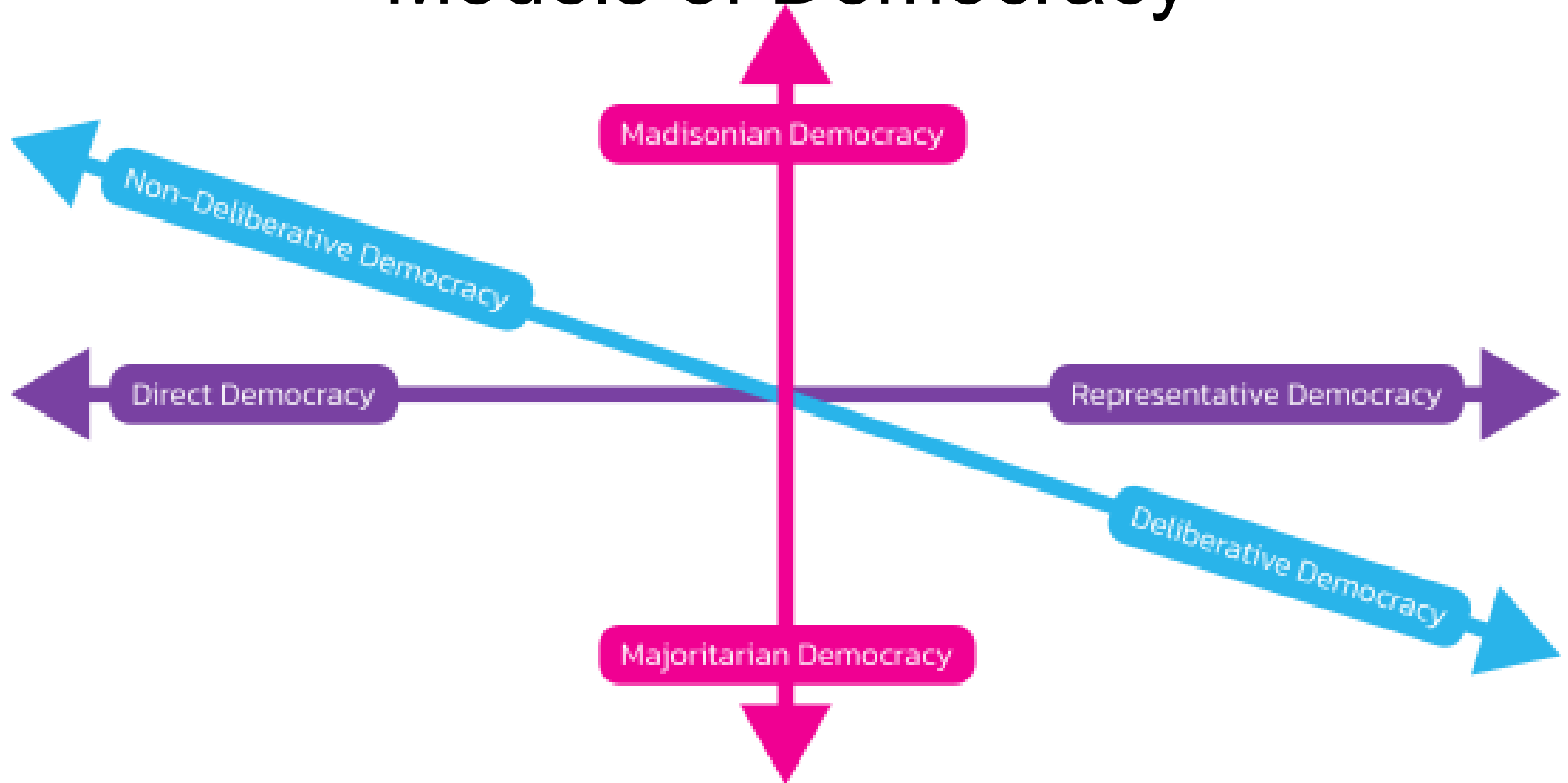


This presentation
presents theory
foundations of the
Paderborn university

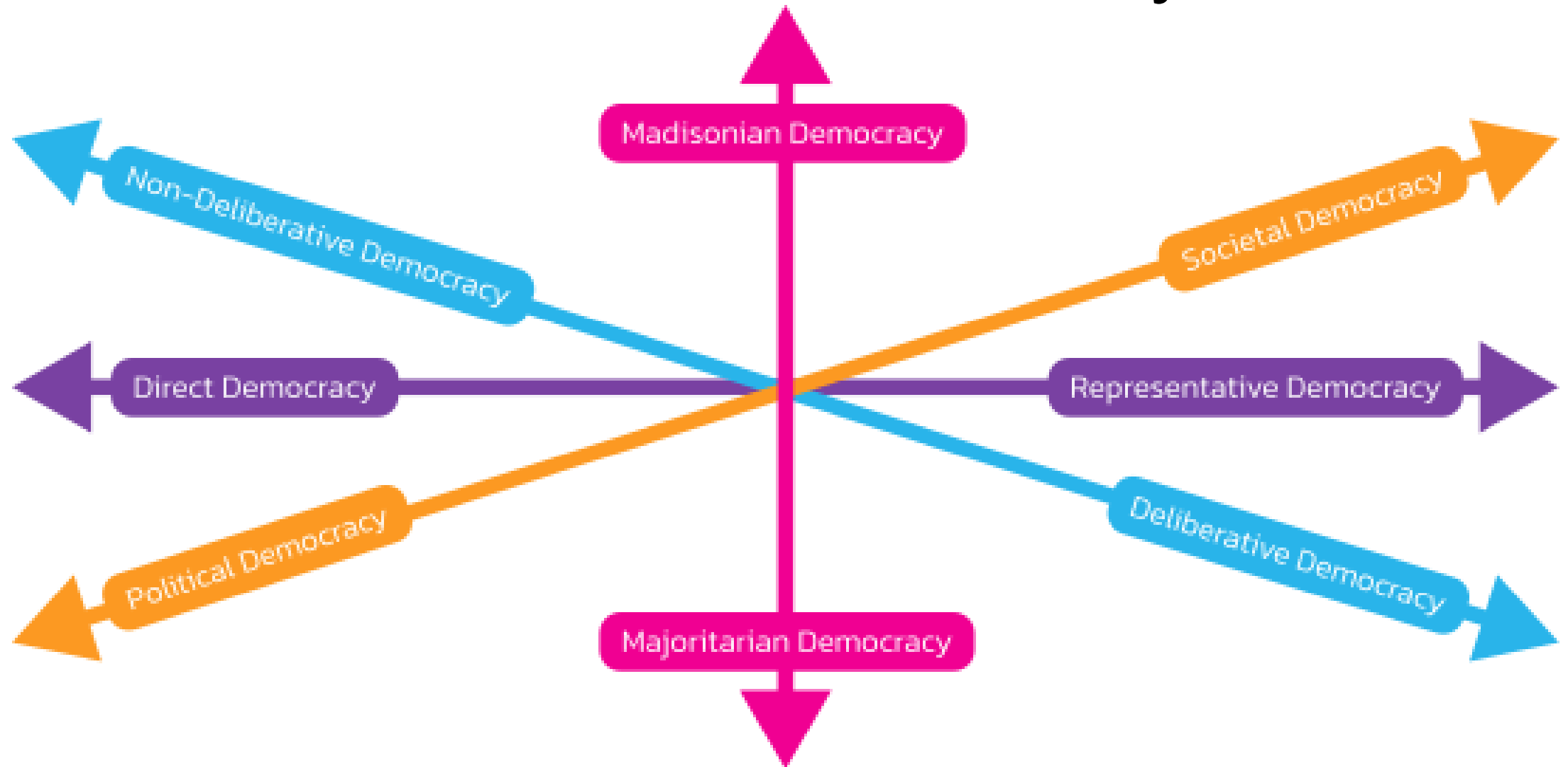
Theoretical Background: Models of Democracy

- **C. B. Macpherson** (1977) introduced the notion of models of democracy
- Building on Macpherson, for **David Held** a model of democracy is “a theoretical construction designed to reveal and explain **the chief elements of a democratic form** and its underlying structure of relations” (Held 2006, 6)
- These authors list models but do not set out theoretically grounded typologies of democracy models and theories.
- James S. Fishkin (1991, 43) introduces a model of classifying democracies

Theoretical Background: Models of Democracy

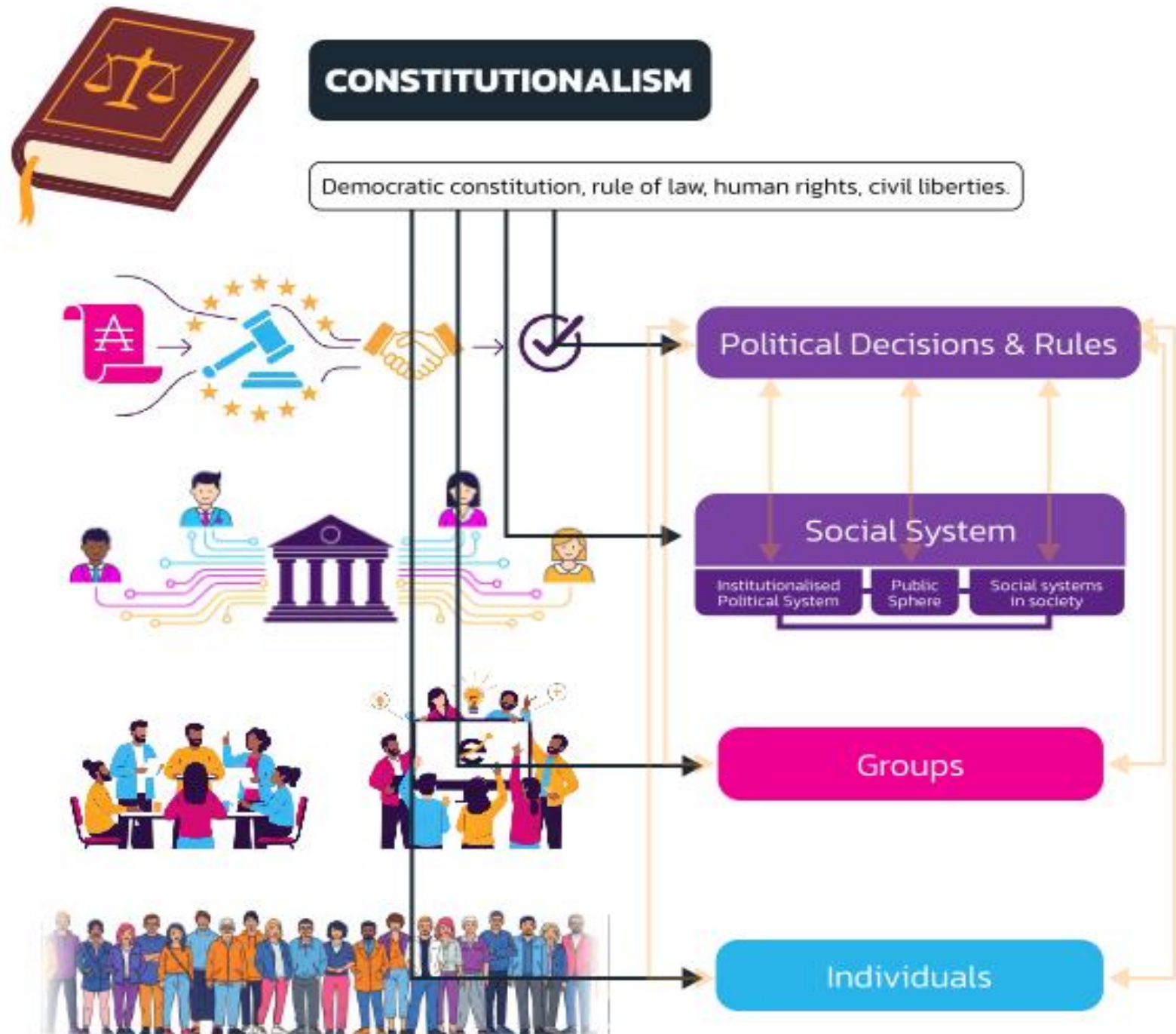


Theoretical Background: Models of Democracy



Constitutional Digital Democracy:

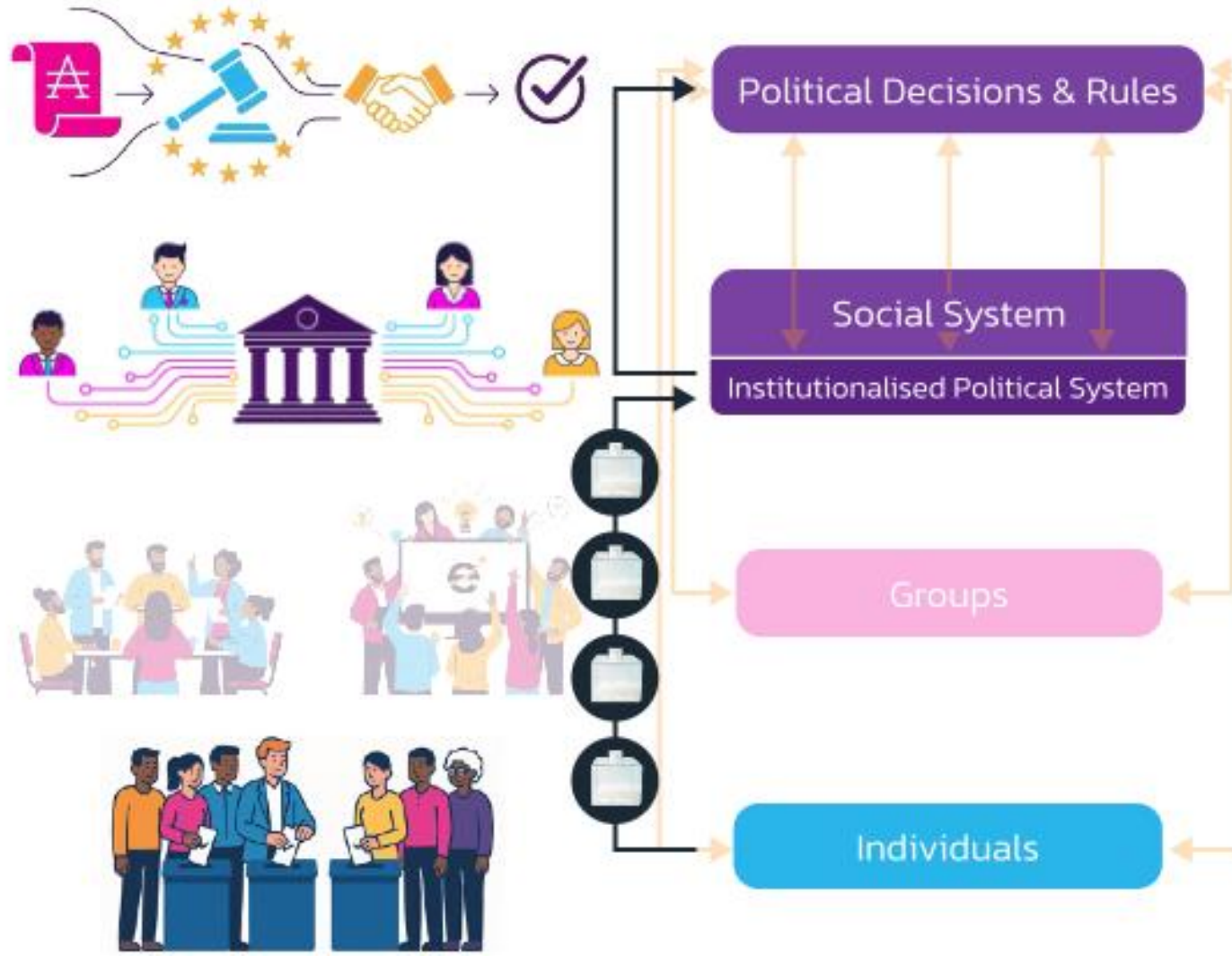
encompasses legal, social, and technical measures and procedures aimed at safeguarding human rights and dignity in online spaces





LIBERAL, REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Representative Digital Democracy:



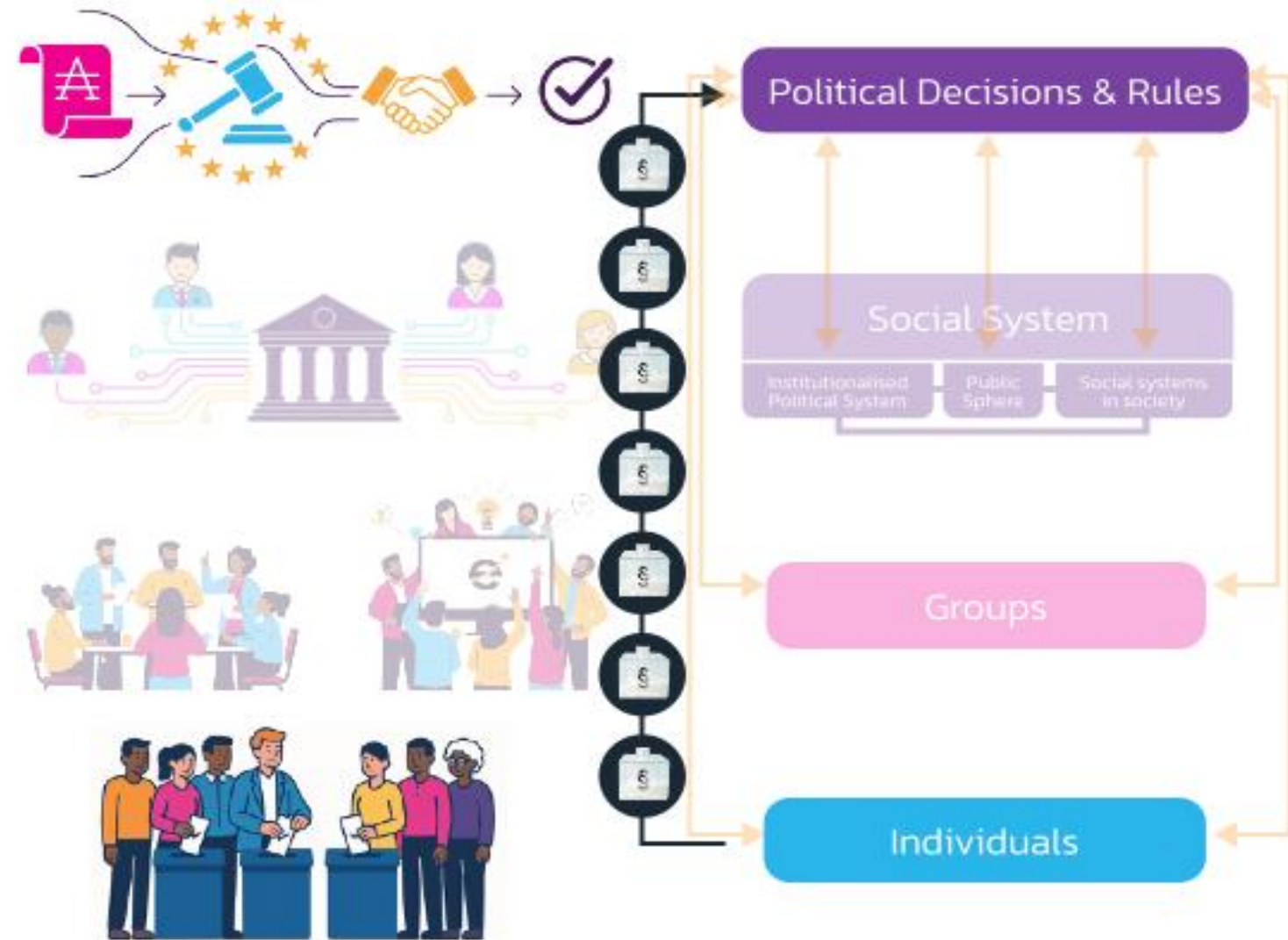
using digital media to organise election of democratic parliaments, assemblies, and councils, as well as to facilitate interaction between citizens on one side and governments and elected representatives on the other.



DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Direct Digital Democracy:

involves using digital media to hold plebiscites, where citizens vote directly on particular topics, policies, and draft legislation.



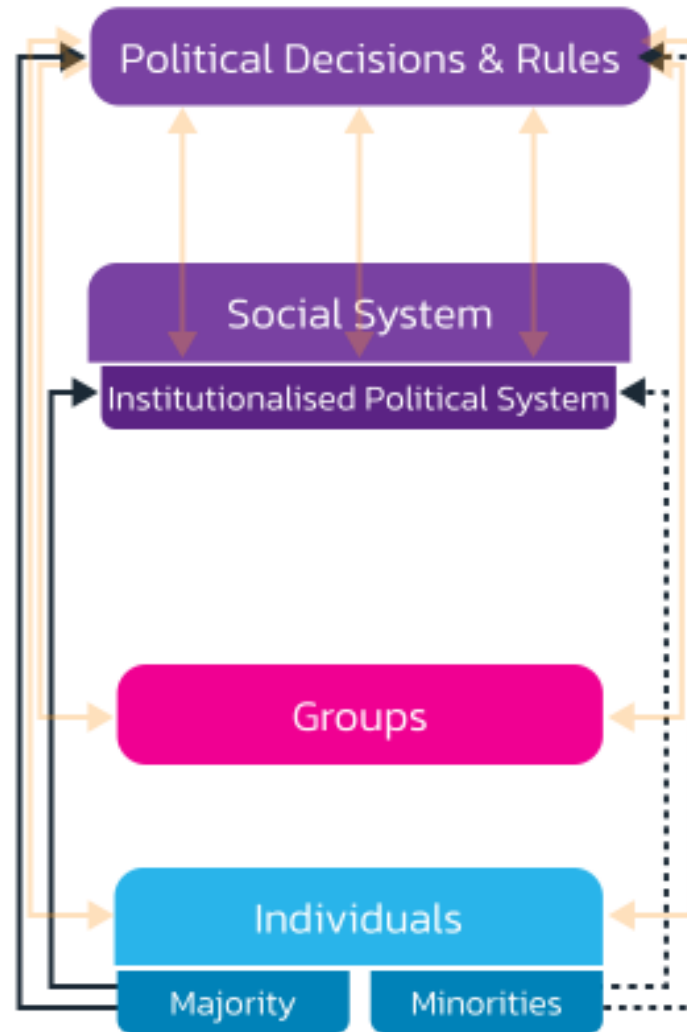


PLURALIST DEMOCRACY



Majority

Minorities

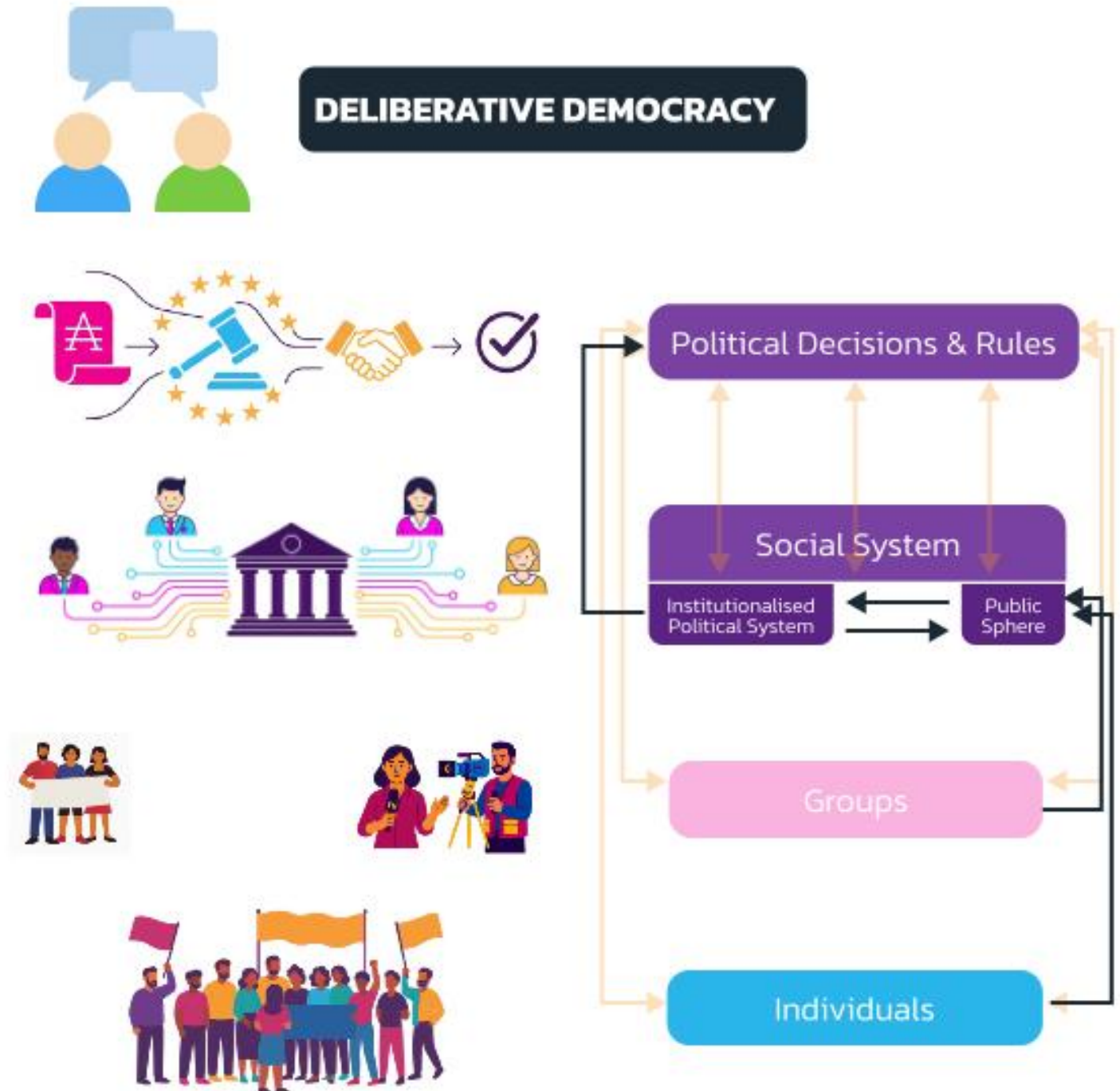


Pluralist Digital Democracy:

measures are implemented to prevent the tyranny of the majority in e-voting and to promote the inclusion of minorities in democracy, ensuring the presence of multiple voices and a diverse political landscape.

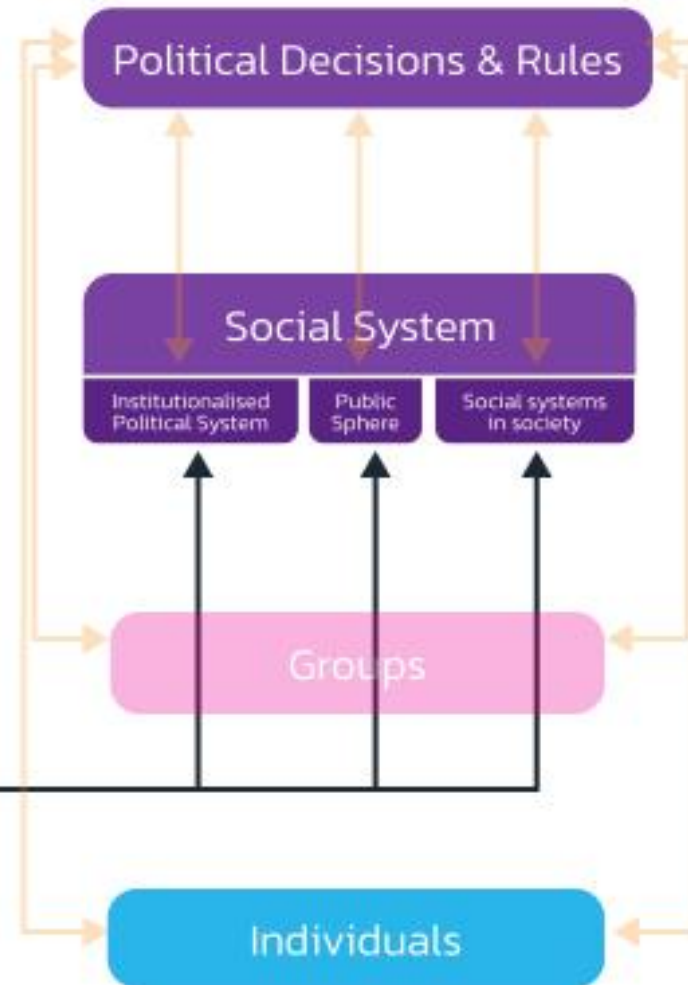
Deliberative Digital Democracy:

entails utilising digital media to promote online debates within the public sphere, activities of civil society, and democratic journalism and news.





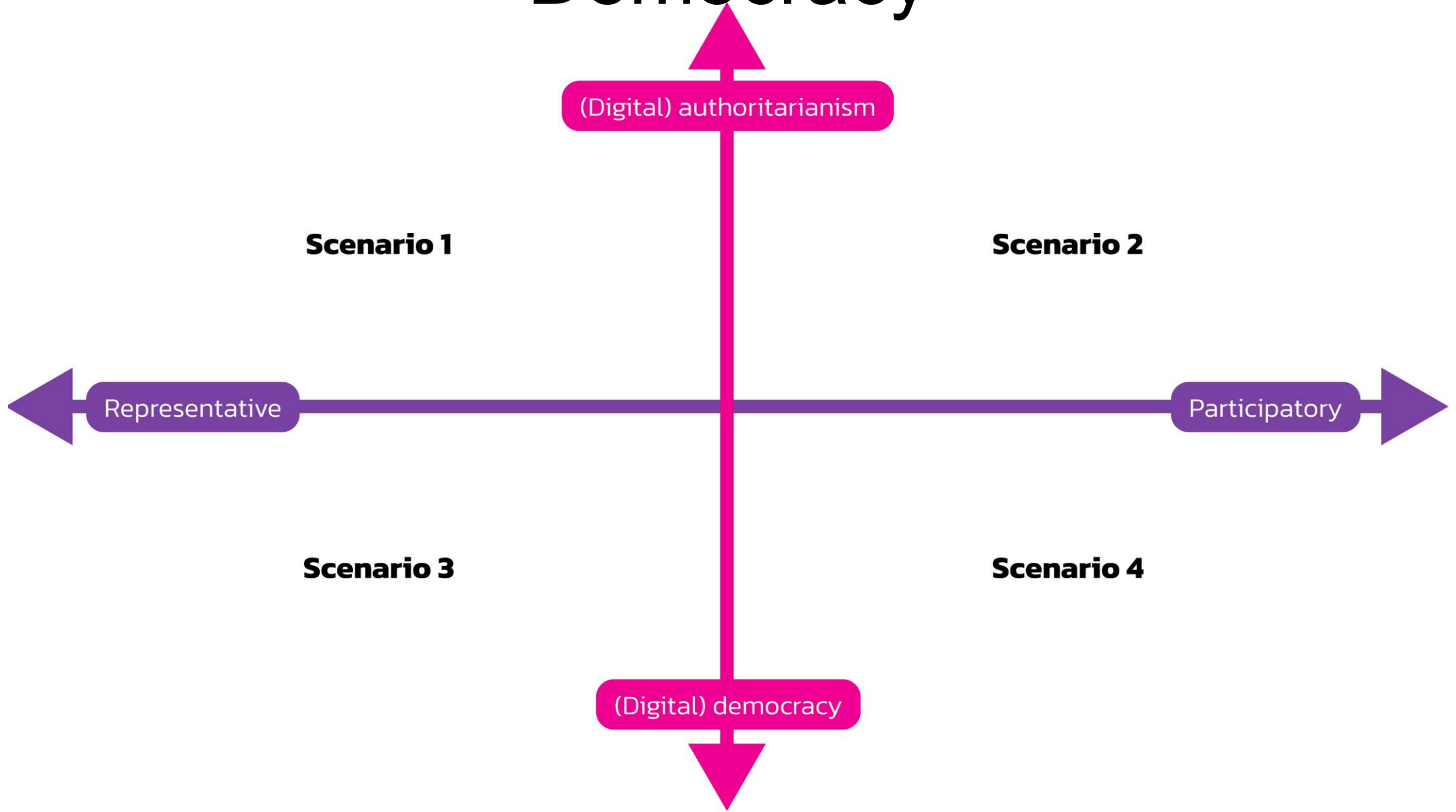
PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY



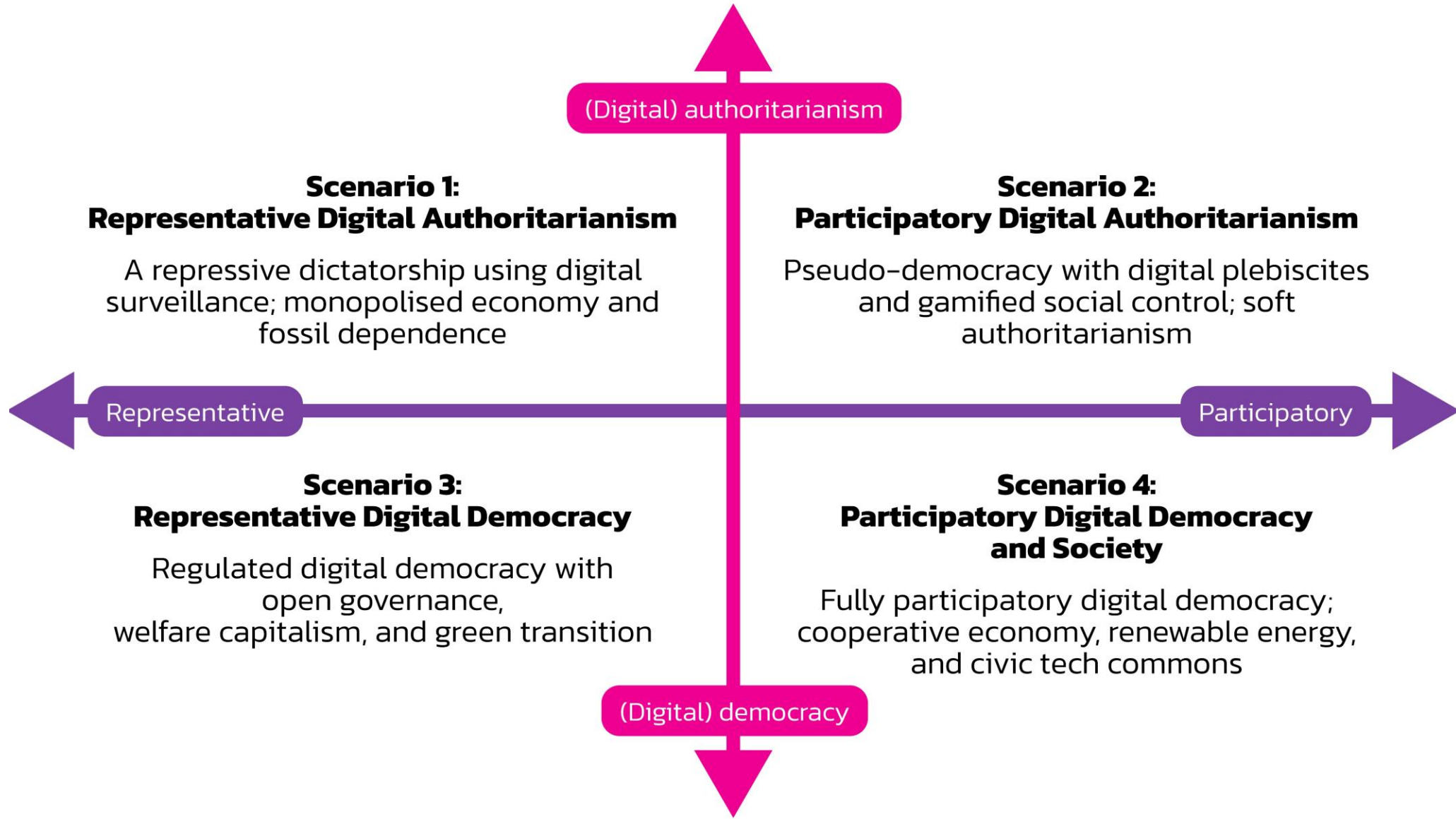
Participatory Digital Democracy:

involves expanding democracy beyond politics into various social areas, such as the economy, by developing a resource base that supports e-participation and encouraging individuals to participate actively in the key structures of the systems they belong to.

Four Future Scenarios of Digital Democracy



Four Future Scenarios of Digital Democracy



Scenario 1 – Representative Digital Authoritarianism

- A traditional **one-party dictatorship** under a strong leader. Technology is used strictly as a means of **top-down control** while the regime claims to represent the people's best interests.
- State-Monopolised Capitalism: A handful of tech conglomerates aligned with the ruling party dominate all industries, while **worker rights and alternative forms of ownership are strictly outlawed**.

Scenario 2 – Participatory Digital Authoritarianism

- A dictatorship hidden behind a "**democratic facade**". Digital media is used to co-opt citizens, prompting them to participate in online plebiscites to manufacture and signal approval for the regime.
- Citizens experience a **superficial sense of free speech**, but genuine critical thought is systematically neutralised. The state weaponises propaganda and social pressure to heavily stigmatise and suppress authentic dissent.
- A capitalist market embedded with gamified apps and social credit scoring subtly "**nudges**" **citizens into regime-friendly economic and social behaviors** while enriching party-aligned oligopolies

Scenario 3 – Representative Digital Democracy

- Top-down institutional utility. Authorities leverage digital technologies to optimise state functions, focusing on **e-government, open governance, and secure e-voting**.
- Citizens actively audit their government using digital consultations and transparency portals. While these tools give the public a powerful voice, **final decision-making power remains securely with elected bodies**.
- The economy is a balanced, mixed system. Private tech firms exist alongside powerful labor unions and co-operatives, supported by progressive taxation and digital public services designed to systematically reduce inequality.

Scenario 4 – Participatory Digital Democracy

- Bottom-up citizen action. Driven entirely by the public, citizens independently use digital tools for active **political engagement, social organising, and mobilisation**.
- While elected governments still exist, **political power is deeply decentralised**. Major legislative and societal decisions emerge directly from informed citizens' assemblies, widespread participatory budgeting, and continuous online/offline public dialogue.
- The economic market shifted away from corporate monopolies toward **worker self-management**. Majority of enterprises operate as public cooperatives or nonprofits.

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FDDS Methodology

Futures of Digital Democracy Survey

Joel Museba,
Paderborn University
Department of Media Studies
Media Systems and Media Organisation Research Group

3. Methodology – Research Question

How do digital democracy experts assess the status, risks, and futures of digital democracy and digital society?

Four sub-questions:

Status quo of digital society

Risks for digital democracy

Digital fascist & authoritarian futures

Digital democratic futures

3. Methodology – Theoretical Framework

Empirical Research

Critical Social Theory

Futures Research

Digital Futures Research

3. Methodology – Empirical Social Research

Online self-completion questionnaire

- Observable, quantifiable social data
- Quantitative & qualitative content analysis

“Empirical social research is understood as a set of methods, techniques and instruments for the scientifically correct conduct of studies of human behaviour and other social phenomena. [...] The common concern of empirical social research is the collection of knowledge about social reality” (Häder 2022, 12).

“The self-completion questionnaire is sometimes referred to as a self-administered questionnaire. [...] With a self-completion questionnaire, respondents answer questions by completing the questionnaire themselves” (Bryman 2012, 232).

3. Methodology – Critical Social Theory

Why critical social theory?

- Empirical data alone does not exhaust the truth about society and merely reflects how individual view societal issues
- Critical theory requires critical empirical research and vice versa

“Theoretical reflections upon society as a whole cannot be completely realized by empirical findings [...] Each particular view of society as a whole necessarily transcends its scattered facts” (Adorno 1976, 68-69).

“Certainly, sociology’s contribution is not exhausted by empirical research, and it is one of sociology’s most noble tasks to exceed the ascertained facts by developing theoretical considerations, and to integrate them in a broader context” (Pollock and Adorno 2011, 155).

3. Methodology – Futures Research

The subject of our study is the future, therefore, we conducted “futures research”. The futurist Jerome C. Glenn argues that its purpose is:

“to systematically explore, create, and test both possible and desirable future visions. Future visions can help generate long-term policies, strategies, and plans, which help bring desired and likely future circumstances in closer alignment.[...] Perhaps the most commonly understood reason for the use of futures methods is to help identify what you don't know, but need to know, to make more intelligent decisions” (Glenn 1999, 193-194).

However, the future itself, as a subject of analysis, is **transempirical** — it cannot simply be derived from present data.

3. Methodology – Digital Futures Research

We are interested in how the interaction between digital technologies and society, and specifically the interaction between digital technologies and democracy (digital democracy), might evolve in the future, particularly by 2036. The research we conducted is part of a specific domain of futures research, namely **digital futures research**. Schlagwein et al. (2025) digital futures research as:

“a research approach that studies multiple possible long-term futures with a specific focus on digital technologies, their societal implications, and the future realities they create, and typically sees those as amendable by human actions and technological design” (Schlagwein et al. 2025, 4).

3. Methodology – Survey Design

Method	Sampling	Timeline & Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-completion online questionnaire (LimeSurvey)• Two-round design• Round 1: closed-ended questions• Round 2: open-ended questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1,400 experts invited• PSM Manifesto signatories Expert mailing lists: AoIR, IAMCR, GigaNet, tripleC etc.• INNOVADE newsletter & LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Round 1: 11–26 Feb 2026 → 333 responses• Round 2: 9–16 Mar 2026 → 154 responses• Platform: digital-democracy.net• Publication of open data (forthcoming)

3. Methodology – Six Dimensions of Digital Democracy

Theoretical backbone informing survey questions (Fuchs et al. 2025)

1. Constitutional	2. Representative	3. Direct
Legal & technical safeguards for human rights	Digital media for elections & citizen-government interaction	Digital plebiscites & online referenda
4. Pluralist	5. Deliberative	6. Participatory
Preventing majority tyranny & inclusion of minority voices	Online public sphere, civil society & democratic journalism	E-participation: budgeting, assemblies, platform co-ops, cyberprotests etc.

3. Methodology – Data, Privacy & Open Science

333

Round 1 responses

154

Round 2 responses

1,400

Experts invited

Data Minimisation

No personal data collected; IP addresses not stored in LimeSurvey

Privacy-First Design

Privacy-friendly settings ensured no personally identifiable information was requested at any stage

Platform

Local LimeSurvey implementation on www.digital-democracy.net

Open Data

Both survey datasets will be published on the Zenodo repository

3. Methodology – Key Takeaways

1 Empirical research + critical social theory + futures research = robust, integrated methodology

2 Two-round expert survey (Feb–Mar 2026): 333 + 154 = 487 total responses

3 Six theoretical dimensions of digital democracy structure the analysis (Fuchs et al. 2025)

4 Time horizon: digital futures in 2036 — four scenarios (authoritarian & democratic)

5 Privacy-first design; both datasets openly published on Zenodo

What Digital Futures, Digital Society, and Digital Platforms Do We (Not) Want?

The Futures of Digital Democracy Survey (FDDS): Results and Policy Implications

Prof Christian Fuchs
Paderborn University
Department of Media Studies
Media Systems and Media
Organisation Research Group
<https://fuchsc.net>



Content

1. Round 1 Results

2. Round 2 Results

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

1. Round 1 Results



1. Round 1 Results

Round 1:

N = 333

11 - 26 February 2026

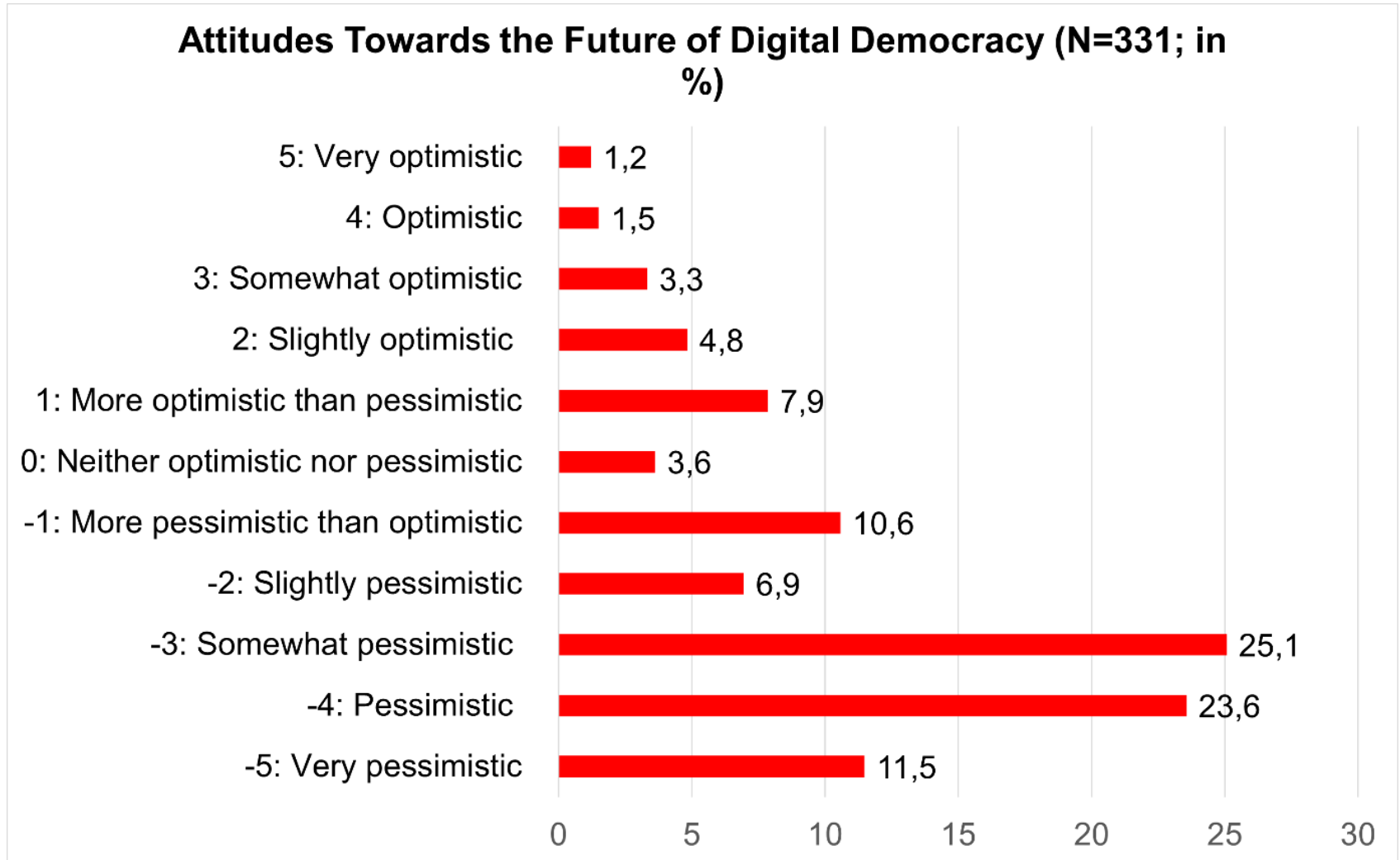
Round 2:

N = 154

9 - 16 March 2026

1. Round 1 Results

On a scale from -5 to 5, how optimistic or pessimistic are you for the future of democracy?



1. Round 1 Results

Result:

slightly to somewhat **pessimistic** – average Likert scale score of **-2.12**;

77.7 percent of the respondents were pessimistic
(Likert scale score from -1 to -5);

3.6 percent neutral,

and 18.7 percent optimistic (Likert scale score from +1 to +5)

1. Round 1 Results

On a scale from **0 (powerless)** to **5 (very powerful)**, how do you assess the **power and influence of the following digital democracy phenomena** in today's world politics?

On a scale from 0 (powerless) to 5 (very powerful), how do you assess the **power and influence of** each of the following online phenomena in global politics, given the **challenges** they pose **to digital democracy**?

1. Round 1 Results

Item	N	Average	SD	Median
Public service media news culture	321	2.95	1.20	3
Fact-based quality journalism	327	2.92	1.20	3
Fact-checking projects	325	2.60	1.30	3
e-voting	306	2.50	1.52	2.5
Digital participatory budgeting	272	2.52	1.40	2.5
Civilised online debates	326	2.44	1.36	2
Democratic social movements' use of digital technologies (democratic cyberprotest)	323	3.15	1.26	3
e-petitions	324	2.27	1.41	2
Platform co-operatives	283	2.85	1.26	3
Public service Internet platforms	318	3.10	1.38	3
Hybrid citizens' assemblies that combine online and offline meetings	319	3.15	1.36	3
Open participatory policymaking where citizens meet online and offline to co-design policies	319	2.98	1.37	3
Average of all average values (variable q1_5)		2.79		

Table 4: Assessment of the power and influence of the following digital democracy phenomena in today's world politics, Likert scale: 0 (powerless) -5 (very powerful), sub-variables of variable q1_5: q1_5_1, q1_5_2, q1_5_12

Item	N	Average	SD	Median
Tabloid online news culture (that involves scandals, ridicule, very short news stories, sensationalist headlines, a focus on celebrities, <u>emotionalisation</u> , dominance of a visual over a textual news culture, unbalanced and biased reporting, political campaigns)	326	3.89	1.08	4
Online disinformation and fake news	328	4.23	0.92	4
Post-truth online culture: politics shaped by ideology, emotions, and scandalisation	322	4.26	0.91	4
Online campaigns against political opponents that involve threats of violence and/or violent attacks aiming at injuring or killing the attacked person(s)	324	3.78	1.05	4
Far-right online culture that involves online communities, groups chats and forums, messaging app channels (Telegram, WhatsApp, Signal, Discord, Theema), online talk shows and podcasts, livestreams, toxic and malicious online dark <u>humor</u> culture, and online memes.	326	4.10	0.99	4
Terrorists using online media for livestreaming or justifying their violent attacks means such as digital manifestos and online statements.	323	3.02	1.29	3
Cyberwarfare that uses digital technologies as a means for attacking opponents and their infrastructures.	321	4.05	1.07	4
Online echo chambers	310	3.79	1.24	4
Average of all average values (variable q1_6)		3.89		

Table 5: Assessment of the power and influence of the following challenges to digital democracy in today's world politics, Likert scale: 0 (powerless) -5 (very powerful), sub-variables of variable q1_6: q1_5_1, q_1_5_2, q1_8

The average Likert-scale values are especially high in the case of the power and influence of **post-truth online culture (4.26)**, **online disinformation and fake news (4.23)**, **far-right online culture (4.10)**, and **cyberwarfare (4.05)**.

1. Round 1 Results

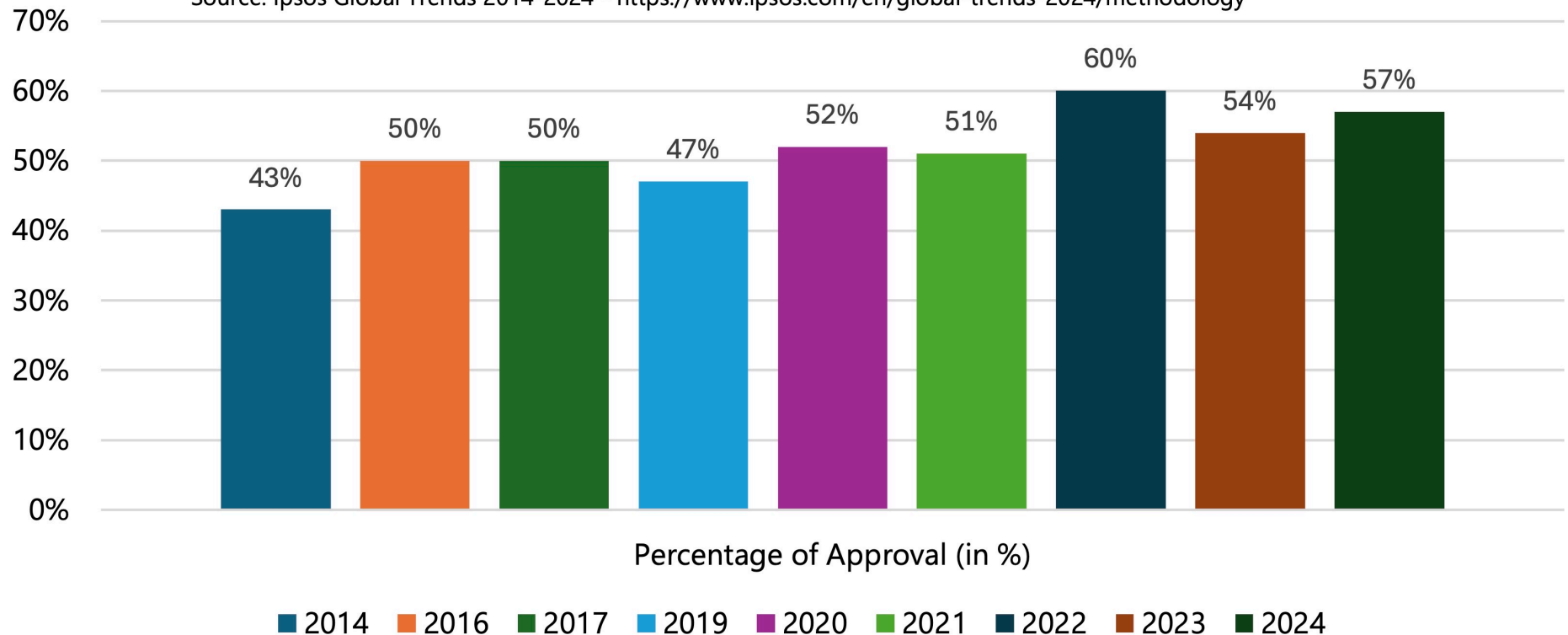
A pessimistic zeitgeist in relation to technology is a general trend.

Ipsos Global Trends Survey

2024: 20 countries,
N=33,083

I fear that technical progress is destroying our lives

Source: Ipsos Global Trends 2014-2024 - <https://www.ipsos.com/en/global-trends-2024/methodology>



In your view, what is the biggest problem and challenge that the Internet, digital democracy, and digital society are facing today? (100 words)

Rank	Problem	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
1	Digital capitalism	151	45.9%
2	Fake news, misinformation, ideology, information overload	94	28.6%
3	Digital authoritarianism and digital fascism	79	24.0%
4	Unregulated, unaccountable and untransparent digital platforms	43	13.1%
5	Polarised, monopolised, fragmented, isolated public sphere (including echo chambers/filter bubbles)	41	12.5%
6	Algorithms' and AI's negative impacts	37	11.2%
7	Rights violations (including censorship, limitation of the freedom of speech, assembly, speech, the press, hate speech, etc.)	23	7.0%
8	Lack of education, skills, courage, critical thinking, and awareness	21	6.4%
9	Privacy violations and digital surveillance	15	4.6%
10	Digital inequalities, digital divides	6	1.8%
11	Patriarchy	5	1.5%
12	European Union	4	1.2%
13	Negative health impacts	3	0.9%
14	Ecological problems	2	0.6%
15	Online fraud and crime	1	0.3%

Table 8: The Internet, digital democracy, and digital society's biggest problems and challenges (N=329)

Combination of problems	Absolute frequency
(Digital) capitalism + authoritarianism and fascism	36
(Digital) capitalism + fake news and misinformation, ideology, information overload	19
(Digital) capitalism + unregulated, unaccountable and untransparent digital platforms	18
Fake news and misinformation, ideology, information overload + polarised, monopolised, fragmented, isolated public sphere (including echo chambers/filter bubbles)	18
Fake news and misinformation, ideology, information overload + algorithms' and AI's negative impacts	12

Table 9: The most frequent combinations of problems in the dataset (N=329)

Typical answers:

“Techbro’s and their intimate corrupt relationship with the Trump government” (#212); “the rise of big firms (Meta, Google, X, and so on without any regulation)” (#244); “The reliance of the digital society on large big tech monopolies whose business models are non-democratic in terms of accountability, transparency, diversity” (#255); “Unregulated ownership by private business, including multi-billionaires with far right views.” (#359); “fake news” (#586);

2. Round 2 Results



2. Round 2 Results

The Severity of Digital Society's Risks

In the second survey round, we **reported the ten major risks that first round respondents identified** to the participants. We asked them **to classify how severe they see the potential impacts of these risks** on digital society using a severity ladder from **0 (no risk) to 10 (ultimate crisis)**

2. Round 2 Results

Respondents perceive all ten major risks that digital democracy faces to be very serious issues

	N	Average	SD	Median
Q2_1_1 Algorithms' and AI's negative impacts	152	7.5	1.8	8.0
Q2_1_2 Digital authoritarianism and digital fascism	153	8.1	1.5	8.0
Q2_1_3 Digital capitalism	152	7.8	1.8	8.0
Q2_1_4 Digital inequalities and digital divides	150	7.2	2.0	8.0
Q2_1_5 Fake news, misinformation, ideology, information overload	151	7.3	1.7	7.0
Q2_1_6 Lack of education, skills, courage, critical thinking, and awareness	152	7.4	1.8	8.0
Q2_1_7 Polarised, monopolised, fragmented, isolated public sphere (including echo chambers/filter bubbles)	151	6.9	1.9	7.0
Q2_1_8 Privacy violations and digital surveillance	152	7.6	1.6	8.0
Q2_1_9 Rights violations (including censorship, the limitation of the freedom of speech, assembly, the press, and association; hate speech, etc.)	150	7.7	1.7	8.0
Q2_1_10 Unregulated, unaccountable and untransparent digital platforms	151	7.6	2.0	8.0

Table 10: Assessment of the risks that certain problems pose to society and democracy, scale from 0 to 10 (0: negligible, 10: ultimate crisis that threatens the existence of humanity)

2. Round 2 Results

Digital Fascism and Digital Authoritarianism

We asked the second-round participants to describe what role **capitalist digital technologies using AI and automation** would play in a future authoritarian or fascist society.

2. Round 2 Results

Forms of coercion:

digital surveillance 53.3%,
physical violence, imprisonment, and fines 42.3%
ideology 42.3%,
economic coercion 28.5%
censorship and rights violations 19.7%

	Absolute number	Relative share
Ideological power	19	13.87%
Corporate power	20	14.60%
State power	17	12.41%
Hybrid forms of power	56	40.88%
Unclear	21	15.33%
Cannot or do not want to imagine	4	2.92%
Total	137	100%

Table 11: Forms of power mentioned in stories about a future authoritarian society, N=137

2. Round 2 Results

By far the largest share of respondents described scenarios of future forms of authoritarianism that **combine classical and novel forms of authoritarianism and fascism**. 40.9 percent of the respondents, a relative majority, described such **hybrid scenarios**.

In these scenarios, there are classical forms of authoritarianism in the form of **violence**, including the killing of opponents and scapegoats. What is novel in this respect is the use of digital technologies for **predictive and automated policing**.

2. Round 2 Results

But there are also **non-violent forms of control** that focus on the **control of public information and communication with the help of algorithms and AI** that are capitalist property aligned with state interests and used for **making critical voices invisible and spreading ideology in the form of fake news, deep fakes, and personalised propaganda.**

Economic power in the form of corporate digital technologies interacts with state power (authoritarian government, police forces) and ideological power.

2. Round 2 Results

Typical answer/future scenario:

“AI-driven surveillance systems would collect behavioral, biometric, and communicative data, allowing authorities to monitor populations continuously and predict dissent before it becomes visible. Repression would therefore become anticipatory: individuals flagged by algorithms could face exclusion from jobs, banking, mobility, or digital platforms without formal punishment. At the same time, algorithmic platforms would shape ideology by curating information flows. Rather than overt propaganda, citizens would inhabit informational environments where dissenting views rarely circulate widely enough to challenge official narratives. Physical violence would likely become selective and targeted, guided by predictive analytics and automated intelligence systems. Crucially, private technology firms would remain central actors” (#70).

2. Round 2 Results

46.0 percent of the respondents mentioned the use of AI (61 of 137 answers):

AI-based ideology production and censorship:

AI-based predictive policing, violence, and repression directed against critics:

AI-based surveillance;

capitalist monopoly control of AI;

AI as universal control system;

AI-based warfare;

AI-based citizen scoring;

AI-based worker control;

AI-generated fake news and deep fakes

2. Round 2 Results

The Future of Digital Democracy

Imagine we live in the year 2036. The threat of authoritarianism has been contained. **Digital democracy has become a global model of society. Can you describe how an ideal digital democracy in 2036 will look like?**

Model of digital democracy	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Participatory digital democracy	59	60.8%
Deliberative digital democracy	58	59.8%
Pluralist digital democracy	27	27.8%
Representative digital democracy	19	19.6%
Constitutional digital democracy	13	13.4%
Direct digital democracy	8	8.2%

Table 12: The role of models of digital democracy identified by respondents in respect to future digital democracy in 2036 (FDDS round 2, question Q_2_3_1), N=97

2. Round 2 Results

Most frequent combinations of answers (>5% of all answers)

Model of digital democracy	Number of models	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Participatory digital democracy	1	20	20,6
Participatory & deliberative digital democracy	2	14	14,4
Deliberative digital democracy	1	12	12,4
Deliberative & pluralist digital democracy	2	7	7,2
Deliberative & constitutional digital democracy	2	5	5,2
Pluralist digital democracy	1	5	5,2

The two models of **deliberative and participatory democracy** are mentioned most frequently by our respondents.

2. Round 2 Results

The political theorist John Dryzek (2000, 1) speaks of the “**deliberative turn**” that took place in the 1990s in democracy theory and democracy studies. Similarly, Hans Asenbaum (2026, 114) speaks of “**the deliberative wave**”. Participatory and deliberative democracy became the two dominant models in analyses of democracy.

A substantial majority of our respondents has been influenced by this turn towards deliberative and participatory democracy.

They imagine the **ideal form of digital democracy to be deliberative and participatory** in character.

2. Round 2 Results

Elstub and Escobar indicate that the **turn towards deliberative and participatory democracy** also took place in the study of digital democracy:

“Democratic innovations have been significantly informed by two democratic theories [...] that have emerged in the last 50 years as critiques of representative democracy, namely participatory democracy and deliberative democracy” (Elstub and Escobar 2019, 16).

Since the 1980s: rise of new social movements & Internet communication: **“Cyberspace has become a global electronic agora where the diversity of human disaffection explodes in a cacophony of accents”** (Castells 2001, 138) => preference for deliberative and participatory democracy

2. Round 2 Results

Typical answer (example):

"The key innovation is deliberative digital assemblies. Rather than reducing democracy to periodic voting, citizens participate in structured online forums where AI assists – not directs – collective reasoning. The AI summarizes complex policy proposals in accessible language, identifies areas of consensus and disagreement, and ensures marginalized voices are amplified rather than drowned out by dominant groups. Crucially, the algorithms are publicly auditable, owned collectively, and governed democratically. Local municipalities use these platforms for participatory budgeting, allowing residents to directly allocate portions of public funds. Turnout is high because participation is genuinely consequential – decisions made in assemblies are binding" (#98).

2. Round 2 Results

A significant number of respondents stresses the positive role AI could play in a future digital democracy:

Such AI support can, for example, take on the form of the **summary of debate arguments**, the **visualisation of debates**, the **translation of discussions**, the **collection of evidence**, the **improvement of policy drafts based on human inputs**, the **identification of recurrent argumentation patterns**, etc.

Our respondents see **AI as support mechanism that under no circumstances should act autonomously** by making debate contributions, inventing policy proposals or participatory budgeting proposals, etc.

2. Round 2 Results

Based on **John Searle**, we can say that **digital democracy requires weak & cautious AI instead of strong AI.**

Strong AI assumes that the computer and AI are minds and can replace the human mind and human creative work.

Democracy requires human judgement. If it is automated, then the danger that it turns into fascism multiplies!

2. Round 2 Results

Most of the answers to our survey that favour participatory and deliberative digital democracy as the ideal digital democracy of the future do not foreground constitutional digital democracy that defines human and civil rights as integral aspects of digital participation and deliberation.

Participatory or deliberative democracy is mentioned in 86 of 97 answers to our survey question about future digital democracy (Q_3_1), which is a share of 88.7 per cent. Out of these 86 answers, constitutional democracy is only mentioned in 11 out of 86 cases, which is a share of just 12.8 per cent of all answers mentioning deliberative or participatory digital democracy. Conversely, this means that 75 out of the 86 cases, which is a share of 87.2 per cent, discuss e-deliberation and e-participation without constitutional digital democracy.

2. Round 2 Results

Problem: **Contemporary authoritarianism and fascism is participatory and deliberative authoritarianism/fascism – fascist subsumption of progressive ideas:**

**1) Grassroots democracy:
“voice of the people”**



Reinstate former President Trump

Yes

51,8 %

No

48,2 %

15.085.458 Stimmen · Endergebnisse

1:47 vorm. · 19. Nov. 2022

187.985

266.666

743.191

8.233



187.985 Antworten lesen



2. Round 2 Results

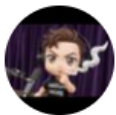
2) alternatives to big tech and corporate platforms

TRUTH.

**Your voice.
Your freedom.**

**Your Voice,
Your Freedom**

At Trump Media, our mission is to end Big Tech's assault on free speech by opening up the Internet and giving people their voices back. We're achieving our mission through our social media platform Truth Social, our streaming service Truth+, and our forthcoming financial services and FinTech brand Truth.Fi.



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The legacy media is a pure propaganda machine. X is the voice of the people.

2. Round 2 Resu



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Another reason why citizen journalism is so critically important.

You, the people, must be the media, as it is the only way for your fellow citizens to know the truth.

3) Citizen journalism & alternative media



Mario Nawfal
@MarioNawfal · Jan 15, 2025

ELON: A LOT OF ACTIVISTS HAVE GONE INTO JOURNALISM TO CREATE THE NEWS

“I think a lot of activists have gone into journalism, not to report the news, but to create the news....



2:23 PM · Jan 15, 2025 · 8.6M Views

2. Round 2 Results

4) The public sphere



One year in, the future of X is bright

♡ 40K

🔖 410



View quotes >



From Twitter to X. We transformed Twitter into X, the everything app, where everyone is increasingly connected to everything they care about. This move enabled us to evolve past a legacy mindset and reimagine how users around the world consume, interact, watch and, soon, transact – all in one seamless interface. We have become the modern global town square.

2. Round 2 Results

“At Rumble, we believe society flourishes when **open dialogue, varied opinions, and new ideas** are accessible to all” (<https://corp.rumble.com/>, accessed on 9 May 2025).



**Rumble: Where Authentic
Expression Thrives**

2. Round 2 Results

Elements of participation and deliberation in the new authoritarianism:

- * anti-elitism**
- * direct citizen-involvement**
- * networked movement communication**
- * counter-movements and counter-media (alternative media)**

**There is the “danger of the potential usage of televoting for installing push-button and point-and-click decision systems that give legitimacy to authoritarian leadership that manipulates public opinion“
(Fuchs 2008 [Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age], 236).**

2. Round 2 Results

Understanding (digital) democracy merely as deliberative and participatory (digital) democracy is not enough.

Democracy needs to ensure that the basic rights of citizens are not violated so that, for example, referenda, mini-publics, citizens' initiatives, social movements, participatory budgeting, e-participation, the digital public sphere, etc. do not extend to undemocratic practices that violate basic rights.

=> combine deliberative/participatory digital democracy and constitutional democracy

2. Round 2 Results

Building on Jürgen Habermas approach to democracy, we can say that digital democracy requires the combination of “communicative forms of democratic opinion- and will-formation” and institutionalised “constitutional principles” (Habermas 1996, 298):

“In agreement with republicanism, it [such a constitutionalist-deliberative-participatory approach to democracy] gives center stage to the process of political opinion- and will-formation, but without understanding the constitution as something secondary; rather, as we have already seen, it conceives constitutional principles as a consistent answer to the question of how the demanding communicative forms of democratic opinion- and will-formation can be institutionalized” (Habermas 1996, 298)

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications



Policy by Nick Youngson CC BY-SA 3.0 Alpha Stock Images

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Our respondents are rather pessimistic about the future, see digital fascism as the more likely digital future than digital democracy, and favour the advancement of deliberative and participatory digital democracy.

A key political question arises: How can (digital) democracy be defended and advanced and (digital) authoritarianism be contested?

Digital Democratic Praxis

What needs to be done politically in society and the realm of digital technologies in the next ten years so that we can circumvent the danger of digital authoritarianism and support the development of a global digital democracy?

Suggested policy	Absolute amount	Relative share in %
Regulation and political reforms	104	74.3
Create alternatives to big tech: autonomous platforms, public digital media, common digital media (platform coops, civic tech, etc.), public/common digital partnerships, decentralised Internet platforms, nationalise/commonify big tech	71	50.7
Support and advance critical digital literacy	35	25.0
Breakup of digital monopolies	35	25.0
Foster accountability and transparency of big tech	18	12.9
Taxation of big tech	15	10.7
Support and advance inclusion and protection of vulnerable groups	14	10.0
Advance privacy protection	13	9.3
Activism	13	9.3
Advance digital workers' rights and a just digital economy	12	8.6
Advance fact-checking, content moderation, critical journalism, and other public sphere mechanisms	11	7.9
Advance green computing	11	7.9
Foster digital cultural diversity	6	4.3
Health and well-being online	3	2.1

Table 14: Summary of the answer to the question about digital democratic praxis in the FDDS's round 2 (question Q2_5), N=140

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Digital democratic alternative	Absolute amount	Relative share in %
Public digital media	26	18.6
Autonomous/sovereign/resilient platforms independent from big tech	26	18.6
Common digital media (platform coops, civic tech, etc.)	24	17.1
Nationalisation/ <u>commonification</u> of big tech	16	11.4
Decentralised Internet platforms	8	5.7
Public/common digital partnerships	4	2.9

Table 15: Summary of the answer to the question about digital democratic praxis in the FDDS's round 2 (question Q2_5) in respect to the creation of alternatives to big tech

Typical answers:

“Our first priority must be building public digital infrastructure. We cannot leave the architecture of our democracy to corporations” (#109);

“the new generation platforms and A.I. tools will have to work adopting the same principles that inspired the Public Service Media of the XXth century” (#49);

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

“Preferably the democratically oriented governments need to push for independent alternatives to big tech” (#125).

“break down and socialize BigTech & expand public service Internet services” (#18);

“large scale investment in European capabilities to build a tech sector that adheres to public values” (#33);

“governments should invest in publicly owned digital infrastructures that support democratic participation” (#39);

“Public digital infrastructure: Fund non-profit platforms supporting democracy, debate, and reliable info” (#56);

“Socialise ownership of the tech platforms and require them to operate on non-commercial public service principles” (#54);

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

#PSMIManifesto

<http://bit.ly/psmmanifesto>

Please sign the Manifesto: <http://bit.ly/signPSManifesto>

The Public Service Media
and Public Service Internet
Manifesto

Edited by
Christian Fuchs and Klaus Unterberger



“Public Service Media content is distinctive from commercial media and data companies. It addresses **citizens, not consumers**. [...] Public Service Internet platforms realise **fairness, democracy, participation, civic dialogue and engagement on the Internet**. [...] the Public Service Internet **requires sustainable funding** [...] The Public Service Internet **promotes equality and diversity**” (PSMI Manifesto Collective 2021)

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

#PSMIManifesto

<http://bit.ly/psmmanifesto>

Please sign the Manifesto: <http://bit.ly/signPSManifesto>

The Public Service Media
and Public Service Internet
Manifesto

Edited by
Christian Fuchs and Klaus Unterberger



“Public Service Media must provide **new opportunities for participation to safeguard inclusion and democracy. Civil society** supports a rich variety of self-organised, collaborative, activity-producing shared collective resources” (PSMI Manifesto Collective 2021)

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Public service Internet platforms combine the traditions of deliberative, participatory, and constitutional (digital) democracy:

They want to **foster citizens' information and debates in the public sphere**, which is the key aspect of deliberative democracy. They want to **foster meaningful forms of user participation, which is an aspect of participatory democracy**. And they have a **commitment to democracy, human and civil rights** as defined in democratic constitutions.

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

In the digital age, the purpose of advancing constitutionally sound user engagement, e-participation, and online debate should be added as digital purpose to statutes that define the legal constitution of public service media.

Besides public service Internet platforms, our respondents also suggest strengthening digital commons projects as alternatives to digital capital (e.g. FLOSS, platform co-operatives).

“Socialization of platforms. Cooperative social media. Open-source algorithms” (#11);

“Most importantly, digital systems based on FLOSS that respect privacy and democratic rights are essential” (#104);

“Democratization of digital infrastructure. Promote public, cooperative, and regulated models” (#106);

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

Concrete models suggested include, for example, public service Internet platforms, self-managed and co-operative Internet platforms (platform co-operatives), free, libre and open source software (FLOSS), worker-owned platforms, and decentralised, federated Internet platforms.



3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

The Futures of Digital Democracy Survey reveals a community of experts deeply concerned about the trajectory of digital society. They assess the contemporary digital landscape as one in which authoritarian and fascist forces are already drawing significant power from capitalist digital platforms, while the institutions and practices of digital democracy remain comparatively underdeveloped.

The experts posit a normative vision of participatory and deliberative digital democracy, grounded in public and common ownership of digital infrastructure, supported by constitutional rights, and sustained by an informed, competent and critically literate citizenry. The survey serves not merely as a diagnosis of where digital democracy stands today – it is a proactive call for democratic action.

3. Conclusion and Policy Implications

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What digital futures do you consider desirable?

How should the ideal digital society of the future look like? And how should it not look like?

What policies and steps are needed in order to advance digital democratic futures and weaken the likelihood of digital authoritarian futures?