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Algorithmic Mediation and the Epistemic Formation of Political Knowledge as a Driver of Political Development: A Critical-Theoretical Reading in the Palestinian Context

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Abstract
This study continues with the theoretical and philosophical discussion of the concept of algorithmic mediation as an epistemic infrastructure that determines the political knowledge and political development in the Palestinian context. It no longer identifies itself with platform specific or purely educational frameworks but rather conceptualizes algorithms as structuring forces that re-arrange the visibility, curate exposure, and frame political meaning. The study relies on the scholarship in the study of algorithms, deliberative democracy, and political development to assert that political knowledge is being constituted in the context of computational architecture under market logics and opaque ranking systems. In weak and digitally intermediated conditions like Palestine, such infrastructures re-tune centrality of issues, narrative salience and pluralistic exchange. The study suggests a conceptual map of connection between algorithmic infrastructure and political developmental paths, thus re-establishing digital mediation in the center of modernization of democracy.
Keywords: Algorithmic Mediation; Political Knowledge; Political Development; Digital Public Sphere; Palestine; Deliberative Democracy; Epistemic Infrastructure.

الوساطة الخوارزمية والتكوين المعرفي للمعرفة السياسية بوصفها محركًا للتنمية السياسية: قراءة نقدية-نظرية في السياق الفلسطيني

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الملخص
تواصل هذه الدراسة النقاش النظري والفلسفي لمفهوم الوساطة الخوارزمية بوصفها بنية معرفية (Epistemic Infrastructure) تحدد المعرفة السياسية والتنمية السياسية في السياق الفلسطيني. فهي لا تنحصر في الأطر التعليمية أو المرتبطة بمنصات محددة، بل تؤطر الخوارزميات بوصفها قوى بنيوية تعيد تنظيم قابلية الظهور، وتقوم بعملية تنقيح التعرض للمعلومات، وتؤطر المعنى السياسي.
وتستند الدراسة إلى الأدبيات المتعلقة بالخوارزميات، والديمقراطية التداولية، والتنمية السياسية، لتؤكد أن المعرفة السياسية تتشكل ضمن بنية حوسبية تخضع لمنطق السوق وأنظمة ترتيب غير شفافة. وفي السياقات الضعيفة والمُتوسَّطة رقميًا مثل الحالة الفلسطينية، تعمل هذه البنى التحتية على إعادة ضبط مركزية القضايا، وبروز السرديات، وإمكانيات التعددية في النقاش العام. وتقترح الدراسة خريطة مفاهيمية تربط بين البنية التحتية الخوارزمية ومسارات التنمية السياسية، مما يعيد تموضع الوساطة الرقمية في قلب عملية تحديث الديمقراطية.
الكلمات المفتاحية :الوساطة الخوارزمية؛ المعرفة السياسية؛ التنمية السياسية؛ المجال العام الرقمي؛ فلسطين؛ الديمقراطية التداولية؛ البنية المعرفية.

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1 Introduction

Historically, political knowledge was produced within institutional communicative spaces such as universities, political parties, and mass media, where visible gatekeepers shaped and filtered public discourse. In contrast, contemporary digital environments increasingly rely on algorithmic systems that determine visibility, relevance, and access to information. This shift has transformed how political attention is organized, as platform logics now govern what becomes seen and discussed, often within opaque "black box" systems3737.

Researchers believe that algorithmic systems do not merely organize information, but in fact they construct hierarchies of visibility and participation. Their effects are especially severe in cases where search and recommendation systems reproduce structural inequities or limit exposure to diverse perspectives. Political power and communicative influence in the so-called algorithmic society are increasingly mediated through technical infrastructures that reorganize the epistemic foundations of citizenship and political consciousness3738.

The appearance of algorithmic infrastructures has also changed the ecology of knowledge production at large. Generative systems are actively involved in real-time content creation and selection, especially in digital news environments where automated systems increasingly interact with human editorial decision-making. There is a tendency for algorithmic rules to operate through conditional logics, which structure the emergence of political information as well as its marginalization. Contemporary societies are becoming increasingly "algorithmically infused," meaning that computational mediation is progressively penetrating everyday processes of coordination and decision-making3739.

These changes have significant effects on pluralism and democracy discourse. The idea of filter bubble and the discussion about fragmented publics imply that the process of personalization can be limiting in terms of exposure to other points of view. Empirical studies report that algorithmic curation has the potential to affect ideological variety in online news use, strengthen the effects of echo-chambers, and speed up the spread of fake information. Consequently, political knowledge is becoming increasingly shaped in context through asymmetric visibility and is subject to disputed epistemic power.3740.

This kind of dynamics is relevant, especially in weak political environments. Deliberative democratic theory focuses on communicative interaction and discursive ability as the core pillars of democratic legitimacy. Development of politics as the growth of deliberative ability and epistemic inclusion is dependent on the quality of communicative infrastructures. At the intersection of already constrained communicative space are algorithmic infrastructures in politically contested settings like Palestine where the public sphere is mediated by geopolitical asymmetry and contested mediation. The consumption behavior of digital media by Arab youth also shows the high level of entanglement between digital media and the identity formation of political youth.3741

It is against this backdrop that this paper poses questions of how the relationship between algorithms and mediation in politics restructures the establishment of political knowledge and how this restructuring forms the future of political development within the Palestinian setting.

Table 1. Core Dimensions of Algorithmic Mediation and Their Epistemic Political Effects

3737 Pasquale, F. (2015). The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information. Harvard University Press.

3738 Trilling, D. (2024). Communicative feedback loops in the digital society. Weizenbaum Journal of the Digital Society.

3739 Kitchin, R. (2024). The Data Revolution and Algorithmic Governance.

3740 Flaxman, S., Goel, S. and Rao, J. M. (2016), 'Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption', Public Opinion Quarterly, 80, pp. 298–320.

3741 Vosoughi, S., Roy, D. and Aral, S. (2018), 'The spread of true and false news online', Science, 359:6380, pp. 1146–1151.

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Dimension	Operational Logic	Epistemic Effect	Political Implication
Platform Governance	Institutional control of visibility and ranking	Structured exposure	Reordering of issue salience
Algorithmic Curation	Personalization and predictive filtering	Selective knowledge acquisition	Conditional pluralism
Datafication	Quantification of user behavior	Metric driven relevance	Proceduralized power
Attention Allocation	Engagement optimization	Emotional amplification	Polarization risk
Conditional Rules	IF THEN computational logic	Automated decision pathways	Invisible governance

2 From Neutral Code to Epistemic Power

2.1 Deconstructing the Myth of Technical Neutrality

The enduring theoretical challenge of the alleged neutral instrumentality of algorithms cannot stand. Socio technical architectures entail the deployment of algorithmic systems that encode institutional priorities, economic incentives and normative assumptions. According to Gillespie, algorithm is not just a sorting device, but it is an institution that stipulates relevance, credibility, and visibility . Pasquale also shows that opaque is not incidental but structural, which allows knowledge hierarchies to be built without equal responsibility[3742].

Beer conceptualizes this embeddedness as social power consisting in classification and ranking. Algorithms do not merely reflect reality; they actively participate in its construction through hierarchies of attention. Bucher demonstrates that algorithmic governance operates through conditional logics that subtly shape participation and feedback. Information about politics circulating through such infrastructures is not governed by transparent or democratically negotiated criteria. This critique is supported by empirical evidence. Studies of search engines highlight the capacity of algorithmic systems to reinforce structural bias and epistemic marginalization. In the algorithmic society, governance increasingly operates through technical infrastructures that reshape the foundations of authority and legitimacy. Algorithms therefore function as epistemic gatekeepers rather than neutral conduits.[3743].

2.2 Ranking Bias and the Politics of Visibility

Ranking is a political performance. Algorithms influence the discourse of the people by promoting some results and pushing others into obscurity. Neyland and Mollers indicate that algorithmic rules create power via conditional operations that create asymmetrical visibility. The salience and interpretive weight of digitally mediated environments is dictated by visibility. The filter bubble thesis suggests that personalization may confine users to narrow information environments, while concerns about fragmented publics highlight the weakening of shared epistemic foundations. Empirical studies show that algorithmic curation shapes ideological exposure, reinforces clustering effects, and accelerates the diffusion of misinformation. Overall, ranking mechanisms introduce systematic bias

3742 Pasquale, F. (2015), The Black Box Society: The Secret Algorithms That Control Money and Information, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
3743 Peeters, R. and Schuilenburg, M. (2021), 'The algorithmic society: An introduction', in The Algorithmic Society: Technology, Power, and Knowledge, London, U.K.: Routledge, pp. 1–16.

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in visibility, reorganizing epistemic authority by prioritizing engagement metrics over accuracy and pluralism.3744.

2.3. Algorithmic Framing and Knowledge Stratification

In addition to ranking, the algorithms define political reality by recommendation systems and indicators of engagement. Wagner and associates refer to the modern societies as being algorithmically permeated, with cognitive horizons being eliminated by computational mediation. Framing is a factor that determines the contextualization and emotional coding of issues, hence interpretation3745.

The mediation and authorship of political information are further blurred by the integration of generative systems into news production. Digital newsrooms increasingly employ artificial intelligence in editorial processes, transforming narrative construction and dissemination. Automated systems therefore function as co-producers of political meaning. These developments contribute to the stratification of knowledge, as predictive analytics and behavioral profiling expose users to differentiated informational environments. Studies of Arab youth highlight how mediated consumption patterns shape political perception and participation. Such differentiation can weaken shared epistemic foundations that are essential for democratic life.3746.

Deliberative democratic theory emphasizes inclusive communicative infrastructures as a key source of political legitimacy. In this view, political development is understood as a process of deliberative capacity building. However, when exposure to information becomes stratified and is shaped by algorithmic systems that prioritize emotionally charged content, the epistemic conditions necessary for reflective citizenship may be constrained.

2.4 Algorithm as Epistemic Authority

The progressive impact of ranking bias, framing and stratification is the code turned into epistemic authority. Algorithms define what is seen, as well as what is plausible or pressing. The transformation of the public sphere that is analyzed by Zürn (2024) can be explained by the fact that communicative infrastructures rebalance recognition and power. Such a recalibration can be seen as algorithmic infrastructures. The characterization of algorithms as epistemic authorities is to admit their structural position in the modern knowledge regimes. These structure the access, structure interpretation and modulate scale participation. The process of neutral code to epistemic power transformation is a critical change in the circumstances of political knowledge formation. It is no longer the crucial question to decide whether algorithms will impact political knowledge, but it is the question of how their power can be questioned and regulated in a normative way3747.

3 Algorithmic Reconfiguration of Political Knowledge in the Palestinian Context

Search engines are becoming a primary gateway to political reality in the Palestinian context. Rather than functioning as neutral systems, search engines organize and rank information through algorithms that shape which narratives appear authoritative. Because ranking criteria are largely opaque to users, these systems implicitly construct hierarchies of credibility when individuals search for information on governance, resistance, or international law. These hierarchies reflect the social power of algorithms, which structure attention and define the salience of political issues not by mirroring public priorities but by actively shaping them. Structural marginalization can also be reproduced through

3744 Sunstein, C. R. (2017), #Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

3745 Wagner, C. et al. (2021), 'Measuring algorithmically infused societies', Nature, 595, pp. 197–204.

3746 Habes, M., Safori, A., Darwish, A. R. S., Bdoor, S. Y., Alsabatin, H. and Kanan, M. (2024), 'Examination of the factors social TV acceptance among Arab students', in Al-Sartawi, A. M. A. and Nour, A. I. (eds), Artificial Intelligence and Economic Sustainability in the Era of Industrial Revolution 5.0, Studies in Systems, Decision and Control, vol. 528, Cham: Springer.

3747 Zürn, M. (2024), 'Public sphere and global governance', Philosophy & Social Criticism, 50:1, pp. 255–277.

these computational regimes of visibility, where algorithmic logics interact with pre-existing deliberative processes in politically unstable settings.3748.

Social media algorithms regulate repetition and urgency in political communication, while search engines shape processes of discovery. The visibility of content in user feeds is largely determined by engagement metrics and predictive modeling, which structure the rhythm and emotional dynamics of online discussions. In the Palestinian communicative context, where online mobilization is widespread, algorithmic amplification tends to prioritize highly interactive content. Empirical evidence shows that personalization can reduce ideological diversity and reinforce biased exposure patterns, while echo-chamber dynamics intensify clustering within digital networks. Such patterns can deepen polarization and restrict cross-cutting discourse in contexts marked by geopolitical asymmetry and competing narratives. These dynamics are further amplified by the rapid spread of misinformation under algorithmic curation. Studies on Arab youth also suggest that platform architectures significantly shape political perceptions and forms of engagement. Consequently, algorithmic systems actively structure political priorities by determining what receives attention and which issues become publicly visible.3749.

Journalistic production and narrative formation are increasingly transformed by algorithmic mediation. Automated systems are now widely involved in the selection, framing, and circulation of news in digital newsrooms, reshaping editorial practices. Recommendation algorithms guide audiences toward interpretive frames, amplifying dominant narratives while marginalizing alternative perspectives. In this way, filtering processes that appear neutral may in fact structure political discourse through computational infrastructures. Algorithmically curated news environments often privilege virality and emotional appeal, reinforcing certain accounts as common sense. This development challenges deliberative democratic principles, which emphasize exposure to diverse arguments and rational discussion as foundations of democratic legitimacy. Political development, understood as the expansion of deliberative space, becomes constrained when algorithmic systems prioritize sensational or emotionally charged content, thereby weakening the epistemic conditions necessary for reflective political judgment.3750.

These forces have direct influence on political pluralism. The communicative infrastructures determine the visibility and the effect of opposing opinions in the mass media. Algorithms intersect with structural constraints that already exist in Palestine, whose geopolitical asymmetries preclude the topic of discussion. Political development, or as the extension of the deliberative capacity, the inclusion of epistemics, is at least partially conditionalized by algorithmic governance. The relationship is complicated by ethical issues related to artificial intelligence. One of the emphases of scholars focuses on the normative duties implicated in the algorithmic systems, and the other side of the argument is that abstract ethical principles cannot be applied without detrimental results. The rise in regulatory efforts across the globe is a sign of increasing awareness of the risks of algorithms to the democratic process3751.

On the whole, these processes are not independent but cumulative. The search algorithms manipulate issue centrality, social media systems construct communicative priorities, news recommendation systems influence the formation of narrative, and metrics of engagement reconstruct pluralism. These

3748 Noble, S. U. (2018), Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New York, NY: NYU Press.

3749 Lazer, D. M. J. et al. (2018), 'The science of fake news', Science, 359:6380, pp. 1094–1096.

3750 Habes, M., Ali, S., Salloum, S. A., Elareshi, M., Ziani, A.-K., & Manama, B. (2020). Digital Media and Students' AP Improvement: An Empirical Investigation of Social TV. International Conference on Innovation and Intelligence for Informatics, Computing and Technologies (3ICT) Program.

3751 Risse, M. (2023), Political Theory of the Digital Age, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

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mechanisms jointly make the role of computational infrastructures as important brokers of political knowledge in Palestine.

Table 2. Traditional Political Knowledge Formation vs. Algorithmically Mediated Political Knowledge in Palestine by (Mittelstadt 2019)

Dimension	**Traditional Formation**	**Algorithmically Mediated Formation**
Issue Centrality	Determined by institutional agendas and editorial judgment	Determined by ranking systems and engagement metrics
Narrative Construction	Structured by journalistic framing and academic discourse	Structured by recommendation engines and virality dynamics
Exposure Diversity	Shaped by institutional plurality	Shaped by personalization and clustering algorithms
Authority and Credibility	Anchored in identifiable gatekeepers	Embedded within opaque computational infrastructures
Political Pluralism	Negotiated within shared public forums	Conditioned by platform architectures and visibility hierarchies

4 Conceptual Model of Algorithmic Political Development

Based on the analysis of the previous section on algorithmic mediation in conditions of non-sovereignty and hybrid political sphere dynamics, this section introduces a conceptual approach to algorithmic political development. The model does not treat algorithmic systems as neutral channels of information transmission; rather, it conceptualizes them as restructuring forces that reorganize the epistemic conditions under which political knowledge is produced. It theorizes algorithmic mediation as an epistemic infrastructure that shapes visibility, exposure, and cognitive orientation, thereby influencing developmental trajectories. In this view, political knowledge formation becomes stratified and computationally mediated, emerging within architectures that operate beyond the boundaries of local sovereign control[3752].

Figure 1. Algorithmic Mediation under Conditions of Non-Sovereignty By (author)

[3752] Altakhaineh, A. R. M., Alghathian, G. A. and Jarrah, M. M. (2025). 'A comparative study of accuracy in human vs. AI translation of legal documents into Arabic'. Artificial Intelligence and the Language of Law, 14.

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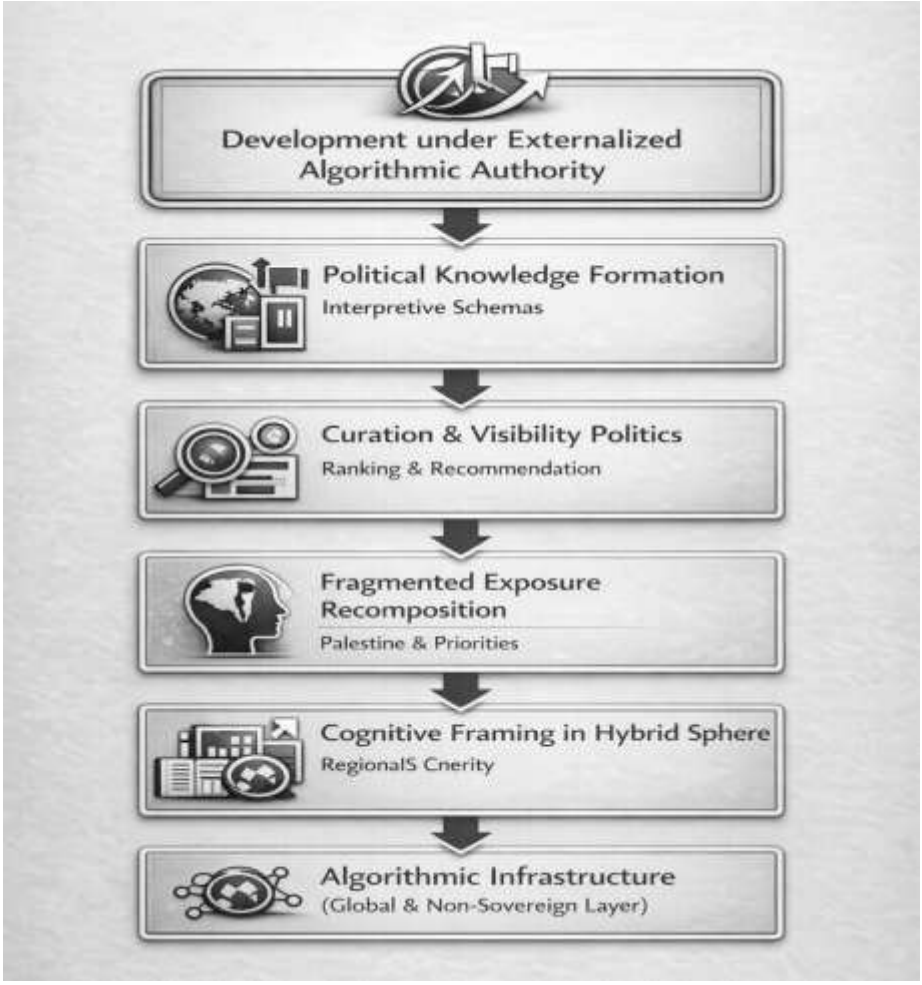

The model situates the general theories of algorithmic mediation regarding the conditions of non-sovereignty, geopolitical asymmetry, and dynamics of hybrid public space particular to the Palestinian case.

4.1 Algorithmic Infrastructure as Foundational Layer

However, at the core lies algorithmic infrastructure. Institutional and economic arrangements embed algorithms within the operational logic that governs information flow and decision-making processes. This opacity turns such infrastructures into concentrated sites of epistemic authority. In algorithmic societies, governance increasingly relies on data-driven systems that redistribute informational power. Consequently, algorithmic infrastructures function as structural frameworks through which political visibility and relevance are produced and organized.3753.

4.2 Content Curation and the Politics of Visibility

The second layer relates to curation, where algorithms encode priorities through conditional rules embedded in ranking, recommendation, and suppression processes. These mechanisms function as forms of social ordering, shaping participation and recognition through visibility thresholds. In this way, algorithmic curation determines which actors and narratives occupy the center of political attention. Such processes can reproduce structural inequalities in representation, as demonstrated in studies of algorithmic bias. The overall outcome is the formation of differentiated epistemic spaces rather than a neutral or uniform informational environment.3754.

3753 Gillespie, T. (2014), 'The relevance of algorithms', in Gillespie, T., Boczkowski, P. and Foot, K. A. (eds), Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 167–193.
3754 Neyland, D. and Möllers, N. (2017), 'Algorithmic IF…THEN rules and the conditions and consequences of power', Information, Communication & Society, 20:1, pp. 45–62.

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4.3 Exposure Patterns and Informational Ecologies

Patterned exposure is produced through algorithmic curation. Personalization can reduce informational diversity, and empirical evidence shows that algorithmic exposure contributes to ideological clustering and biased news consumption. It also facilitates the rapid spread of misinformation in digitally mediated environments. Exposure patterns thus play a mediating role between infrastructure and cognition by shaping the repetition, intensity, and scope of content encountered by users. These dynamics are further intensified by the integration of automation in news production. Studies on digital consumption among Arab youth indicate that platform structures significantly influence political perception and participation. As a result, exposure is increasingly organized through predictive analytics rather than deliberative choice.3755.

4.4 Cognitive Framing and Epistemic Orientation

Cognitive framing emerges through repeated exposure to mediated information, where interpretive schemas are gradually shaped by sustained interaction with curated content. Deliberative democratic theory emphasizes that political development depends on communicative environments that enable reflective judgment and pluralistic exchange. In this perspective, democracy evolves through the expansion of deliberative capacity supported by inclusive communicative infrastructures. However, this capacity can be constrained when algorithmic framing privileges emotionally charged or sensational content. Computational infrastructures in digital capitalism can also intensify the circulation of propaganda. As a result, cognitive orientation becomes increasingly aligned with engagement optimization rather than epistemic robustness.3756.

4.5 Political Knowledge Formation and Developmental Trajectories

The product of cognitive framing is the formation of political knowledge. Issue salience, interpretive orientation, and evaluative criteria are included in political knowledge. Deliberative capacity is a measure of the quality of democracy (Curato 2015), and deliberation as a practice is a kind of critical inquiry of communicative power3757.

It is these epistemic processes that shape broader developmental trajectories. Changes in communicative infrastructures redefine legitimacy and power within the public sphere. In digitally mediated environments, political development becomes increasingly dependent on forms of algorithmic governance, raising inherent normative and ethical concerns. The implications of artificial intelligence systems extend beyond efficiency considerations, as abstract ethical principles are insufficient without corresponding structural accountability. The emergence of regulatory responses aimed at mitigating algorithmic harm to democracy reflects growing recognition of these stakes. Even within Arab media institutions, ethical concerns highlight context-specific vulnerabilities related to digital governance3758.

The algorithmic mediation model is a conceptualization of algorithmic mediation as a cascading epistemic infrastructure. Curation is shaped by infrastructure, exposure is shaped by curation, cognition is shaped by exposure, political knowledge is shaped by cognition, and developmental trajectories are shaped by political knowledge. The political development, and especially the political development of fragile situations, should thus be perceived not only as institutional reform, but an epistemic state organized by algorithmic power.

5 Discussion

3755 Cinelli, M. et al. (2021), 'The echo chamber effect on social media', PNAS, 118:9.
3756 Fuchs, C. (2018), 'Propaganda 2.0', in The Propaganda Model Today, London, U.K.: University of Westminster Press, pp. 71–92.
3757 Hammond, M. (2019), 'Deliberative democracy as a critical theory', Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy, 22:7, pp. 787–808.
3758 Mittelstadt, B. D. (2019), 'Principles alone cannot guarantee ethical AI', Nature Machine Intelligence, 1, pp. 501–507.

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The most important normative question is, does algorithmic mediation foster political development or recreates new types of domination? On the one hand, algorithm systems increase the reach of information, speed of communication, and reduce the obstacles to participation and enable dispersed actors to organize publics outside the conventional gatekeeping forms. In this regard, the digital infrastructures can also be catalysts of an epistemic inclusion and political activation. Conversely, these systems are executed in corporate architectures that have been optimized towards engagement and data extraction. As a result, the political visibility can become conditioned by the interaction metrics instead of quality of deliberation, which may possibly relocate the epistemic power into the obscurity of the technical systems and in favor of virality over thoughtful dialogue.

This tension indicates a larger struggle of market rationality and normative sources of citizenship. Whereas the market-based platforms focus on efficiency and individualization and competitive publicity, the democratic citizenship relies on equality of voice, common informational platforms, and reasoned debate. Engagement-oriented amplification could thus commodify attention, serving the short-term and affective values over reflection and complexity, and heightening polarization in weak political situations.

Algorithms mediation in the Palestinian instance collides with a fragmented already existing public space which is conditioned by geopolitical asymmetry. At the same time, digital platforms both increase the possibilities of communication and subject political speech to outside computational control. The Palestinian online publicity therefore seems to be a hybrid space that is both empowering and structurally limited. This paper is conceptual, but not empirical, and therefore the need to conduct future research investigating platform-specific dynamics and exposure patterns within digitally mediated political space may be seen.

6 Conclusion

This paper states that the concept of algorithmic mediation must be seen as an epistemic infrastructure, which is actively applied to the direction of building political knowledge and, as a result, political evolution. Production of political knowledge is no longer happening through the traditional institutions like journalism, academic discourse or face to face deliberation. On the contrary, it is becoming more and more a part of computational spaces, in which algorithms structure visibility, give precedence to stories, and control exposure. Algorithms, in this respect, do not merely relay the information about politics but organize the cognitive circumstances within which political judgement can be made possible.

The primary theoretical input of the paper is the re-characterization of algorithmic systems as structural factors of political development instead of marginal technology. The incorporation of the findings of the algorithm research, deliberative democratic theory and the literature of political development enables the study to suggest a conceptual framework making the algorithmic infrastructures central to the process of epistemic formation and democratic processes.

This worldview is especially applicable to a weak situation like Palestine where political development cannot be explained by a mere institutional reform. It should also be investigated in the frames of knowledge production, salience of issues, and narrative prominence influenced by algorithms.

The future research ought to be able to test the platform-specific dynamics, capture the exposure diversity, and examine how the interaction between algorithmic governance and local political cultures in an attempt to understand the overall implications of the algorithmic power with democratic development.

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