



The Power Paradox

Dependency, Concentration, Big Tech, and Pluralism

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Platform Opinion & Political Power

TikTok and X recommend pro-AfD content to non-partisan users ahead of the German elections

Published: 20 February 2025

Updated: 27 March 2025

(Global Witness, 20.02.2025)

Elon Musk bans several prominent journalists from Twitter, calling into question his commitment to free speech



By Oliver Darcy, CNN Business

🕒 4 min read · Updated 9:16 AM EST, Fri December 16, 2022

(CNN, 16.12.2022)

NEWS > FINANCIAL SERVICES

Victory for Trump as EU backs down on digital taxes in next budget

Shelving the plan could help EU persuade the U.S. to give it a more favorable trade deal and comes just two months after the Commission suggested it.

(Politico, 11.07.2025)

AN OPEN LETTER TO ERIC SCHMIDT

Why we fear Google

Von Mathias Döpfner 17.04.2014, 18:38 Lesezeit: 14 Min.



(Frankfurter Allgemeine, 17.04.2014)

“We simply have to be cautious with digital corporations because we have no real alternatives to the offering by the American digital industry”

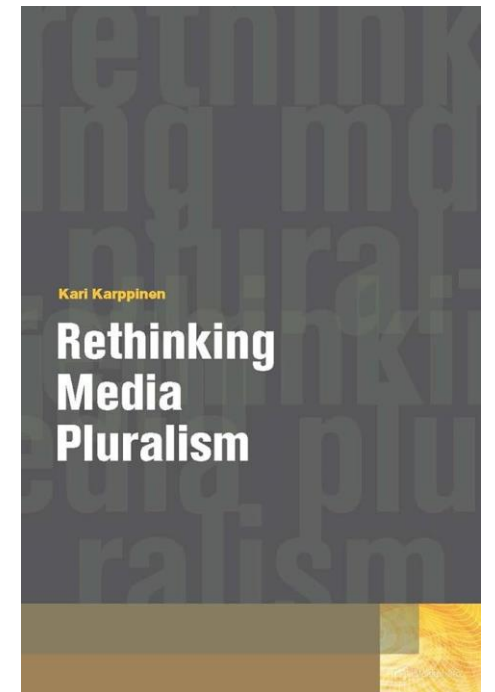
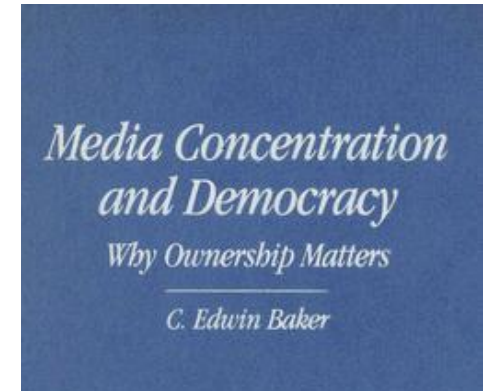
(EU Observer, 10.06.2025)

Power & Pluralism

- ❑ C. Edwin Baker: **dispersing media power**, like dispersing voting power, is a **basic egalitarian condition** of democracy.
- ❑ Kari Karppinen: the ability to enable pluralism and equality in public opinion formation **depends on the structural power relations** of the media ecosystem.

Without power dispersal, there is no **structural pluralism** — and without structural pluralism, democracy cannot thrive.

- ❑ Power in **relational** context.
- ❑ Power within the **spaces** where opinions and news are created, shared and consumed.
- ❑ Steve Lukes & Byung Chul-Han: **Reciprocity** of power.



Platform-Media Dependency

(Tech Policy Press, 20.10.2025)

Distribution: via search and social media.

Revenue: through advertising models controlled by Google and Meta; sometimes funding schemes.

Infrastructure: via cloud services (AWS).

Production: increasingly through (Gen)AI systems for writing, recommendation/search, visibility, and verification.

Publishers = technology-takers, not technology-makers

PERSPECTIVE

Amazon Cloud Outage Reveals Democratic Deficit in Relying on Big Tech

CORINNE CATH, DON LE / OCT 20, 2025



Independent media has an infrastructural problem



Author



MEDIA

Agustin Ferrari Braun
PhD student / University of
Amsterdam

(Algosoc, 16.04.2025)

Infrastructure Dependency

“The outage once again demonstrates how **concentration in the computing industry**—in this case, in cloud computing—can crash major parts of the internet, all at once. These disruptions are not just technical issues; they are **democratic failures**. When a provider of such a singular scale as AWS goes dark, critical services go offline with it. **Media outlets become inaccessible**, secure communication apps like Signal stop functioning, and the **infrastructure that serves digital society crumbles**.” (Corinne Cath, 2025)

(Tech Policy Press, 20.10.2025)

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Digital Media Concentration

Media dependencies ***reinforce*** existing concentrations of power.

Concentrations are inherently ***undemocratic***.

- ❑ Not only ownership; Big Tech has concentrated power over technological, economic and epistemic resources.
- ❑ Innovation opportunities limited to large media.
- ❑ Smaller local media: little choice but to merge.

= widening **resource divide** & growing **media concentration**

! Where local journalism collapses, public trust and civic participation collapse with it !

Unequal Bargain

Even when **governments legislate**, *platforms can afford to walk away.*

Examples:

- ❑ Meta withdrawing news content in Canada & Australia
- ❑ California News Transformation Fund: from proposed tax law to temporary voluntary deal with Google

Even when **media negotiates** with Big Tech, *"it's always a take-it-or-leave-it deal. We take it, or we disappear"*

Media associations must unite for fair compensation

October 17, 2025

AI-driven content and data scraping undermine journalism's business model. Media associations must advocate for fair compensation to sustain public interest news, which is vital to democracy.

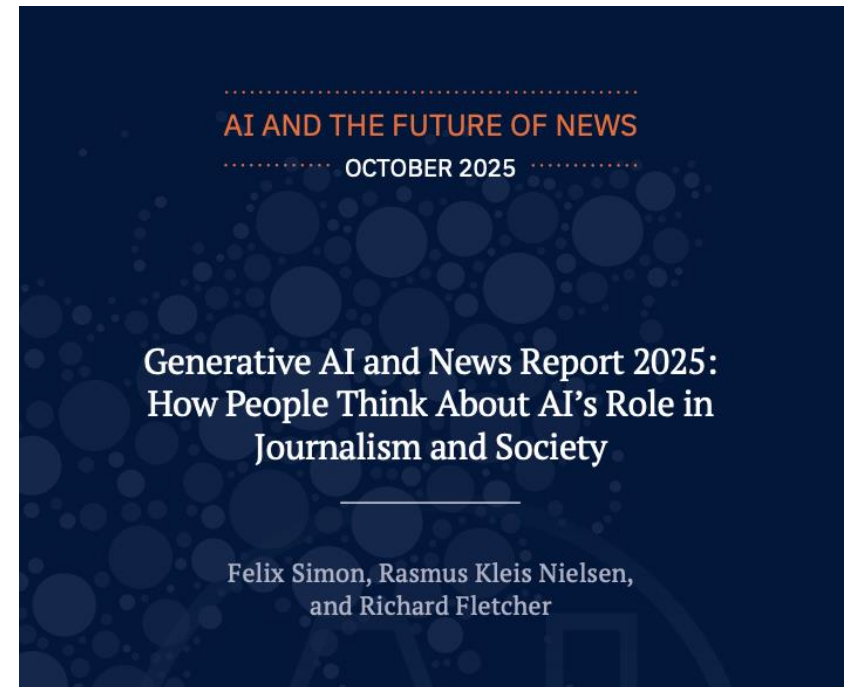
(DW, 17.10.2025)

AI Amplifier

Deepening existing and **creating new** dependencies.

Uses of GenAI as (trusted) **source** of information increase.

Journalism fuels the data that powers these models, profits flow to Big Tech, with **licensing deals favouring only major publishers.**



EU Legal Landscape

DSA, DMA, EMFA, AI Act, etc.:

Despite good steps, remain overly market-centric, risk-oriented & weakly enforced!

What we need more of: Incentive-based regulation!

Positive obligation to protect media pluralism, not just to prevent harm!

Incentive-based regulation

Power & Resource
Concentration

Big Tech Dependency

Unequal Bargain

AI Amplifier

Foster collaborations & responsible AI innovation

Shared infrastructures, data, resources

Collective bargaining

Diverse expertise

Clear guidelines & standards

Structural long-term funding

Tax credits (for public-interest tech/collabs)

Responsible procurement

Competition exemptions

Publicly funded AI infrastructures & tools

Recommendations

- ✓ Enforce existing regulation to curb harms and market concentrations (e.g. DMA).
- ✓ Implement EMFA media pluralism test in national media concentration laws.
- ✓ Create guidelines on how to define key concepts (under EMFA: “media pluralism”, “editorial independence”, “online environment”).
- ✓ Positive safeguards for local journalism.
- ✓ Incentives to foster diverse ecosystem for responsible AI development & for supporting collaborations in journalism.

Thank you!

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