

# A new alternative platform for the public discourse

*Beyond big-tech corporate social media*

version 1.0

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This project was born about the main concern related to the present issues, problems, and challenges of the **current model of social media platforms**. That goes around different dimensions: politics, technology, economics, social and psychological welfare, sustainability, and many other areas that social platforms affect.

It is not owned by anyone in particular, nor by any organization, in the sense that involves a network of people concerned about the situation of established social media platforms, and that are willing to collaborate to find and implement some solutions.

In that sense, it is an **open-collaborative multi-regional ongoing live** project, that intends to think, develop, and put in practice a new social network that can function as a viable alternative to the established corporate platforms, that though decadent, are still dominant today.

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## Summary

In short terms, the general objective of the project is to put forward a viable positive alternative platform to X-Twitter, or to the greenwashed or alt-right present alternatives. The current social platform oriented towards the public debate, has become destructive to culture and the general interchange of ideas.

Tough this project is intended to give an alternative to X-Twitter, it is not going to just replicate it in a washed form, as other projects are intending, instead, it's going to aim towards to completely rethink the organizational governance behind the platform, based on a community-owned model that has been successful in other areas, and also to improve upon its features.

By now, that main platform of public discussion is still X, owned by Elon Musk, that has **become very problematic** in many senses— in terms of arbitrary rulings, vertical decision-making, twisted moderation standards, promoting hate speech and violence, bizarre content diffusion, censorship and shadow-banning, the conversion to a media of propaganda rather than a social network, and many other concerning issues related to it that come even before Musk's purchase.

This project is still in **generic form**, meaning that is mostly theoretical and un-branded, and that its foundations will serve as structural basis to the later on solidification of the project, which will imply the evolution towards a concrete functional platform, with a proper organization-company behind.

Also, this project **doesn't belong to anyone in particular**, nor person or organization, but a network of people around many different disciplines and regions, that are worried about the current situation of public debate platforms.

Tackling a project of this scale is a huge undertaking, especially when it comes to effectively scaling and maintaining the platform. Fortunately, **many factors today are shifting in ways that make this endeavor much more feasible** than before. Key influences include the evolving sociopolitical landscape, the decreasing entry costs for social media technology, and recent advancements in diverse alternative governance models:

a. The first is the **growing discontent with the platform X-Twitter** and its manager Elon Musk, especially in the west and Latin America— because the social network is becoming a media of

right-wing propaganda, where the user base is significantly declining, generating significant frictions and lawsuits with government officials. Beyond that, a changing geopolitical environment towards a multipolar order that can open many possibilities at the social and technological level. Also their greenwashed alternatives like Bluesky or Threads, are not going to scale, because they are under scrutiny for their long past of systematic malpractices and lack of transparency.

b. The second, referred to the reduction in the barrier costs of technology, in the sense that software has become quite low-resource intensive to develop, especially considering the multiple open source initiatives related to social media technology, that simply wasn't there in the past, and that now we can simply use and improve.

c. The third, and maybe most relevant, is the emergence of new organizational models for companies and platforms, with many successful examples around different sectors already in practice— like for example [platform cooperatives](#), glocal governance, and many other frameworks for alternative positive models than the traditional private corporate model that is making a lot of harm around.

Though these models of platforms are quite new in historical terms, there are **already functioning very well** applied cases of platform cooperatives that this project wants to emulate and learn from— like for example some in the ride-sharing sector or even in the food delivery sector.

At the software level, at this, point the project is intended to use Mastodon as the backend engine infrastructure, that is an open source software for social media, whose interface is similar to Twitter, plus the addition that it works with ActivityPub protocol, which enables to interconnect platforms to each other in the *fediverse*, which already, and without any sophisticated organization and minimal funding, already has over ten million users.

For the front-end there are some interesting open source interfaces that we can use, whose user experience and graphics is very similar to twitter. Also, the other option is to create our own front-end interface, which will require some work, but it is not as difficult as creating a backend from scratch.

Beyond structural things, new models of organizations can implement **digital participation** in decision-making—a very useful concept which recently emerged, and that can complement more traditional methods like real-world assemblies or voting instances. For this, we can use many open source tools available, and that are already in use in the municipality sector, in companies

governance, or even in online forums. Also, if considered, there's the possibility to develop one from scratch, because it's not a difficult task at all.

For implementation, **we're aiming to start with crowdfunding**, to get initial funds, and later on search for other more structural ways of funding related to the platform itself or even public or private funding opportunities.

The organization behind the platform is intended to be legally registered somewhere in the **European Union**, where there is sufficient popular and institutional interest to fund and support an endeavour like this. Also, as a global platform, the intention is to decentralize towards other regions in the planet, and to start this structure outside of Europe, is the objective to open headquarters somewhere in Latin America right away.

And for all of these, the idea here is to implement the platform relying on a network-based effort, based on ***glocal* multi-regional and multidisciplinary** way of thinking, conceptions that are quite different from the ones that traditional platforms are based on.

## Justification

After the multiple outcomes of the last decade, with regard to social media platforms, there is no longer any doubt that the existing platforms, owned mostly by large private US corporate companies, have not only **widely disappointed expectations** in terms of positive impacts that many -without much sense- proclaimed, but have become real disasters related to **systematic bad practices, chains of corporate scandals**, and the intensification of a **destructive culture** that has solidified and branched through these platforms. For those that studied the subject, this should not be a surprise, because in some sense we are seeing today in social network platforms, the same thing that is happening for decades or even centuries in other areas of the economy— the only difference that now we are just experimenting an intensified manifestation of this due the scale of technological platforms and the amount of naive promises around them.

Thus, if these social media platforms have had any positive impact, it is because they were merely a slight improvement to what came before, but along the way, they have generated a lot of other **problems and dilemmas** of monumental scale, that anyone could predict, and which we now have to deal in our present, before the situation keeps getting worse.

Hand in hand with this, as far as the public sphere is concerned, we are - as a civilization and as people - in a very complicated situation in the **absence of a positive platform for public debate** itself, since the existing ones are co-opted by these concentrated private organizations, who, in addition to holding enormous power without almost any real counterweight, they lack significantly of pro-social ethics and a proper positive collective mission.

Nowadays, this public debate is channeled mostly through these established social networks, controlled by multi-billionaires, who beyond being entrenched in a huge pile of economic resources of dubious origin, also think that they are the monarchs of the modern era, completely lacking public responsibility, accountability, or democratic culture.

The main platform that today channels this public debate is *X (former Twitter)*, which has been plagued by **scandals of growing magnitude** for some time now, and even more so now after the purchase of it by Elon Musk— a person strongly associated with the far right, who has messianic ups and downs.

Other new platforms that have emerged, such as *Truth Social* of Donald Trump, are not the exception, because they belong to the same system of perverse incentives and unethical people with negative and sometimes destructive ideas.

We need today, perhaps more than ever, the creation of platforms that can be **viable alternatives** to these large established negative platforms, and which can effectively compete with them, and subsequently outcompete them.

Without a doubt, such a project will require a monumental effort, and the **gathering of multiple people and organizations** from **different countries**, with different **specialized disciplines**. But beyond the magnitude of the initiative, today, unlike before, it can be said that there is a **favorable context** for such an effort, since decades of seeing what has been created has generated widespread discontent.

## The problem

The problem with established social networks, and especially those aimed at public debate, is not mostly the technology itself, but the **incentives behind them** and the **governance models structured** in the existing contemporary corporate culture— which are determined by the present macro-historical context and the distribution of power behind it. That in some sense, they have similar manifestations in many areas of our societies, but somewhat they express in a more aggressive and negative ways in the current technological platforms.

Thus, said in another more concrete way, these outcomes that we are seeing today, in terms of the negative impacts of technological platforms, have to do with the **ownership and governance models** behind the platforms, the **modus operandi of current business dynamics**, and the **socioeconomic-political regime** that encompasses them.

It is not a mere coincidence that these technological platforms have been structured in such a way that they are prone to generate a series of destructive outcomes, since they are a product of the historical development of **contemporary capitalism**, sustained by the primacy of the United States as the hegemonic geopolitical power.



This socioeconomic-political-historical regime, known as *neoliberal* or “nineties capitalism”, is characterized by a primacy of **concentrated private power**, deployed mostly in financial and technological corporations, and their respective multi-billionaire owners, who position themselves as **dominant powerful groups** over others, consequently benefiting from the current status quo and their respective institutions. Thus, we can see the enormous influence that these technology companies have and the lobbies behind them, the colossal amount of public resources that are allocated to them without social compensation, or all the legal or tax evasion mechanisms from which these large technology companies exclusively benefit.

Also, at the organizational level, this economic regime is characterized by reflecting **privatized ownership** and management models, based on the concept of **profit maximization**, which is oriented under an almost unilateral decision-making power of corporate managers -mainly the CEOs- and powerful shareholders— which **excludes workers, the people** that these actions impact, or to **society** itself. By controlling the administration and having ownership over the usufruct of the benefits of these companies, the business establishment not only has the enormous concentration of the resources generated, but also the concentration of power that these processes create, with almost no counterbalances around.

Given the coexistence of these two factors referring to the political regime and the organizational models of the companies, we can see that these technological corporations have become authentic **regimes of power** that closely resemble what the **feudal regime** was. Hence, many authors today refer to this emerging regime as *techno-feudalism* or *neo-feudalism*, which not only concentrates an enormous amount of resources and political power, but also goes beyond any legislation or democratic power that attempts to set limits.

These issues are clearly evident in traditional platforms like ex-Twitter, once led by Jack Dorsey, and Facebook, under Mark Zuckerberg. These platforms have significantly damaged the reputation of social media through a series of **systematic scandals and bad practices**. These include a lack of transparency in decision-making and corporate actions, abuse of power in moderation and banning practices, the non-consensual sale of user data, misuse of data for harmful purposes, and the excessive concentration of power and resources in the hands of a few hands.

To create better non-traditional alternatives, there is the need to -thin the ideas and frameworks behind these platforms, and to re-shape the entirety of governance systems around them, through different principles of guidance, and to the restructuring of different organizational models.

## Alternatives around

To create possible different positive realities, or at least mitigate some of the negative impacts of this actual socioeconomic regime, we need to take **transformative action** into the **public debate sphere**.

This public debate is of crucial importance, since perhaps there is nothing more important, in terms of canalizing information, the debate of ideas, the manifestation of media, and activism or political action— which today is mostly canalized via the **social network platforms**, that are owned and managed in the interest of these concentrated private groups of power.

There is an already evident need to create alternatives to traditional social networks, lately lucky some natural efforts have appeared around the issue, and in that sense in recent years we can see the emergence of some alternative platforms ideas— we can **find two different lines of alternatives** that have appeared, on the one hand the negative ones, and on the other hand the positive ones.

## Negative alternatives

The negative alternatives, which are often as problematic as or worse than traditional platforms, remain the most prevalent today. They have emerged primarily from the discontent of far-right and anti-progressive movements with the "liberal" status quo represented by platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. At the same time, traditional corporations have attempted to rebrand their scandal-ridden platforms through superficial measures, such as introducing new faces and feigned self-criticism, without addressing the fundamental structural flaws that caused the original controversies.

## Far-right associated platforms

The first strain, **associated with conservative far-right movements**, are touted as “free speech spaces” that reject censorship and “political correctness.” However, in practice, they primarily serve as channels for promoting reactionary and ultra-conservative ideas while reinforcing power structures that differ from the liberal status quo. Rather than offering a truly different platform, these attempts **replicate -or even turbocharge- the traditional model of corporate** organizations, but with a merely “**different approach to moderation standards**”—one that permits ethically questionable content, promotes direct violence, or serves as a technological power to enforce the far-right agenda at the political level. Examples include Elon Musk’s acquisition of Twitter (now X), Donald Trump’s Truth Social, and more extreme alternatives like Gab and Gettr.

Among these platforms, the most prominent is undoubtedly X (formerly Twitter), now controlled by Elon Musk and his associates. Under their leadership, the platform is deteriorating even further than its previous state. It faces issues such as censorship and shadow banning, algorithmic biases, and serving as a vehicle for Musk’s personal propaganda. Additionally, it systematically promotes unethical content and violence. Perhaps most concerning, X is increasingly positioning itself as a traditional media outlet for advancing far-right ideologies. This includes efforts to collaborate with ultra-conservative figures, such as Tucker Carlson, to amplify and legitimize a right-wing agenda.

### Greenwashed “alternatives”

The second category revolves around **greenwashing efforts** by traditional tech moguls and establishment corporate entities attempting to present alternatives to X (formerly Twitter) after Elon Musk’s acquisition. Examples include *Bluesky*, initially associated with Jack Dorsey, and *Threads*, launched by Meta. Despite their branding attempt as fresh alternatives, these platforms are essentially no different from other corporate social media—they merely come with new names, a polished image, and a “friendly” face at the forefront, a fake self-criticisms, while carrying the weight of a very controversial historical track record.

**Neither of these is having -nor will have- good reception**, because the reputation of these people and companies are also in the bottom of the ocean, even below Musk’s one, that at least he has reputation among right-wingers and fans of the neoliberal entrepreneurship culture.

### Positive developments

Fortunately, a range of promising alternatives has begun to emerge. These positive alternatives stem from a growing awareness of the structural issues inherent in large, established technological platforms. Many of these initiatives trace their roots to early "proto-alternatives" that, while innovative, were often ahead of their time. Unfortunately, many of these earlier efforts are no longer active, as they tended to be overly niche, excessively decentralized, or steeped in counter-cultural ideals that limited their broader adoption.

One of the most promising developments that is getting momentum, though not technically a social network in itself, is Mastodon. While it is not a direct competitor to established platforms, it represents a viable alternative to many of the challenges for building viable platforms, or at least a meaningful technological contribution to the ecosystem. Mastodon has gained some popularity, but so far, no Mastodon-based social network, or combination of them, has emerged with the significant impact needed to challenge the dominance of major platforms.

There are some reasons **why we think that is the case**, that essentially have to do with some limitations on the socio-political framework, undeveloped organizational structure models, and still some important shortcomings on the frontend-UI environment.

### Current infrastructure: scope and limitations

Mastodon, in essence, is an open-source software for self-run social networking services, plus also an instance -among others- of a social network server-platform, that allows interconnection into the *Fediverse* using ActivityPub communication protocols. The features that the Mastodon-based software offers, are very similar to the ones on X, but with a plus, that allows interconnection in between platform-communities. In that sense, we can say that Mastodon is **mostly a software initiative**, intended to be used by different communities and organizations that want to run their own specific social media platform.

The team behind Mastodon has correctly comprehended that traditional corporate networks are very harmful to users, to societies, and to public debate in general. They are aware of the problems

of the corporate regime and its incentives, as well as the destructive data management and advertising that these corporations use.<sup>1 2</sup>

Despite their modest budget in comparison to traditional platforms, they have made **important progress** in creating free and open software related to microblogging, to such an extent that even Donald Trump Media's *Social Truth* has decided to use it. It can be said that Mastodon, and the organization behind it, made **enormous contributions** to the deployment of alternative social media platforms. However, at the same time, it can be said that Mastodon-based initiatives, until now, and in almost ten years of existence, have **not reached a significant scale** to become effective alternatives to these traditional platforms., and it doesn't seem that they are going to do so in the future.

Also, the mere idea that an interoperable network of small-scale servers can effectively outcompete big-tech platforms is **questionable**. A lack of sufficient scale can lead to **important disadvantages**, such as limited resources for innovation, slower performance, and difficulty attracting a large and diverse user base. Without the infrastructure and financial resources that large platforms possess, smaller networks may struggle to offer the same level of service, security, and reliability. Maybe some of these disadvantages can be bridged by interoperability frameworks, but at these points, they are still quite underdeveloped.

In this regard, there is still to do a lot of action and development beyond what is currently being done to effectively compete with or even outcompete traditional platforms. The first step is recognizing, at least at this point, the need for the emergence of large-scale alternative interoperable platforms that incorporate innovative management models, alongside offering a significantly improved user experience that goes beyond what is already available. These platforms should also be thought from a broader sociopolitical perspective, and not just at the platform-level, which may imply things like to be design according to global historical developments, or being rooted into wider institutional structures.

All these factors, that we think should be re-taught, are mostly related with political aspects, organizational management model innovation, and the improvement into UX/UIs experience—

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<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.joinmastodon.org/#implications>

<sup>2</sup> <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2t4aUyMLcBBWNpNID8uEYo?si=vrBky0oPS6-OYnWR0DXF1g&t=2136>

things that this document, among other initiatives around, has the main objective to contribute respectively.

## A new social network for the public discourse

Today, perhaps more than ever, is the right time to develop and deploy new alternatives to these large platforms in different areas. Not only are these established platforms getting a **growing distrust from people**, but also because they are having an important **backlash from many governmental institutions**— maybe X is the best example of all of these.<sup>3 4 5</sup>

The public discourse is probably one of the areas that is being **most badly affected** by the present destructive developments of social media platforms, because today digital platforms are the main **channels for information and the debate of ideas**, used by media organizations, institutions, businesses, cultural referents, and regular people.

These present platforms, whether the traditional ones, or their worse alternatives, at this point after **20 years of existence**, have contributed to the mass distribution of false information, the promotion of violence and polarization, the abusive use of users data for manipulation, unjustified silencing of public voices, or the conversion of social platforms to propaganda mediums for specific political agendas.

This, as it is now, **cannot continue**, or if it does, it's going to keep degrading society until a **non-return point**, after which we cannot reverse the damage. Today more than ever, **we need to redouble efforts** to create sane and positive social platforms for the public debate. Task that is not easy, but luckily now, the present may give us a new window of opportunity— regarding **people willing to change platforms**, funding, already done **developments in software technology**, and the **proper geopolitical** context that will open opportunities of power distribution.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://mashable.com/article/elon-musk-x-user-decline-in-uk-eu-us>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2020/01/29/an-oasis-of-bipartisanship-republicans-and-democrats-distrust-social-media-sites-for-political-and-election-news/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/how-americans-confidence-in-technology-firms-has-dropped-evidence-from-the-second-wave-of-the-american-institutional-confidence-poll/>

This will require the collaboration of many people, organizations, institutions and cultures. But even if it is not an easy task, we must do something, because the present situation is unsustainable, that is not only generating a lot of problems and dangerous social dynamics, but it also is hindering a lot of creative capacities and positive societal outcomes of social transformation.

The challenge goes much beyond software development, that at this stage can be said that is something doable or mostly already done even, in the sense that for a viable social network alternative to emerge, there are things that need to improve— that have to do with the **wider sociopolitical context** and the **organizational model** that structure the platform itself.

Related to the **wider societal context macro-factors**, specially those that have to do with the political and economic power regime that we currently have, there is little that we can do or affect at this point in relation to this concrete project— because they are factors that have to do with historical trends, political mobilization, systemic economic development, and many others structural dynamics that go beyond us, and that clearly overseas the scope and the objective of what can or what we intend to do here. Nevertheless, we are going to think about this situation, and put some lines of thought related to positive context dynamics that are happening, and what we think that social movements and political organizations can do to create a favorable context.

The second aspect, related to **innovating and implementing new organizational models** and company practices, is one of the main missions of this project, and one of the things that we believe that we should -and can- contribute to. In these sense, we think that we should re-frame and reorganize how traditional social network platform works, incorporating concepts related to new ways of organization, like implementing new ownership models, new ways of governance models, including digital participation, new ways of organizational layering, applying pro-social ethical frameworks, and many others innovative solutions that are different from the dynamics of traditional-corporate organizational models.

So, we argue here, that for a viable alternative to emerge, we **need three different things**: an **innovative organizational model**, **new software solutions**, and a **positive sociopolitical context** that can embed this new social platform-organizations. In the following document, we are going to explore these points from our point of view, and see what concretely we can push forward in this project.

## The wider context

Before trying to put some lines of thought into the concrete idea of creating an alternative social media platform, is a very necessary thing to go around the present historical context related to social media in general— that is related with history, geopolitics, economic systems, and how the future is going to evolve in different structural factors— in the sense that technology is not neutral or ahistorical, because it's anchored in the root of our societies, our cultures, our past, and our future.

From an historical perspective, we are living in complex times, where the world-system is being **reshaped by structural forces** in different dimensions— that have to do with the shifts of geopolitical power, rapid technological impacts, new emerging cultures, a changing environment, and many other spheres that have manifestations at a global scale. We can say that we are in **transition times**, to somewhere that we don't know with clarity still, and the future, if something, is still in a shifting phase to some other historical time.

Uncertain times have many challenges, because they interpellate us at the knowledge and political level, where previous ways of understanding and acting in the world are no longer reliable, forcing us to re-think and re-act into new historical waters.

Luckily, uncertain times, can bring out new opportunities around new spaces for possibilities, because the previously power structures **can no longer hold and force their way** to live as the only possible way, thus other conceptions can emerge as new possibilities— which some will be good and positive, others maybe not, but at the end, what really matter, is that these new window of opportunity is here, and we need to take it.

To take this positive new opportunities, and specially those related to new platform economy possibilities, we should try to visualize -in our own way- what's going on, what is changing, and which structural factors may open spaces for positive societal transformation.

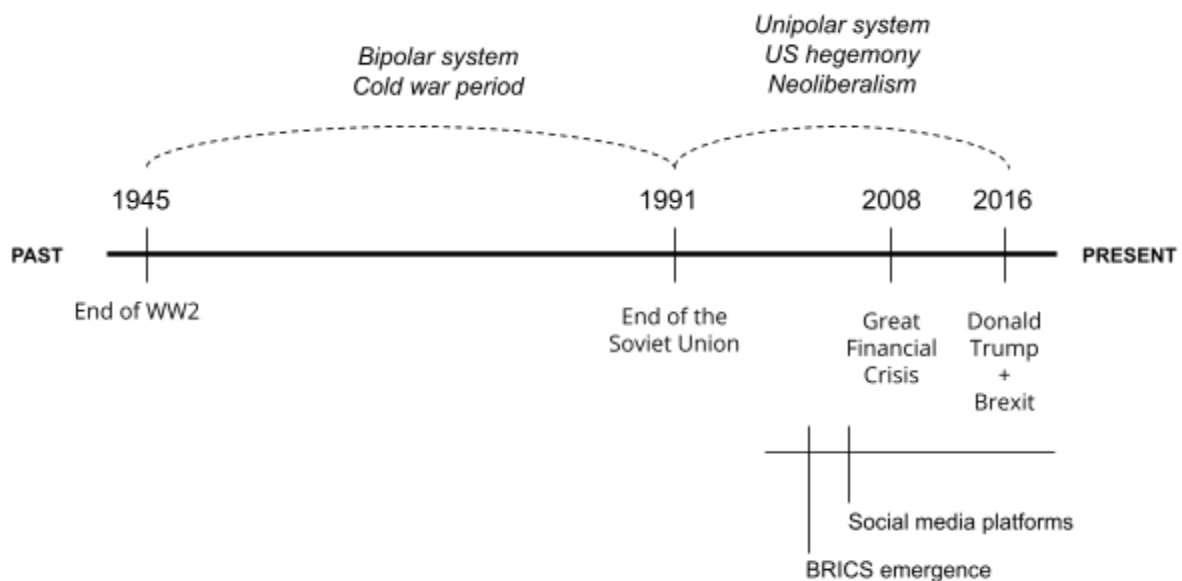
## The end of the end of history



Around thirty years ago, the geopolitical battle between the United States led block and the Soviet Union led block ended, making the west victorious, and becoming the sole pole of power at the geopolitical level, after the disintegration of the soviet system. Capitalism, and the ideas of so-called “free markets” triumphed over rival ideas in the Cold War, and thus, becoming the “only game in town”.

This gave rise to the **neoliberal era**, backed by the United States as the solo hegemonic power, which promoted the creed of private property, unregulated markets, reduced social public spending, low trade barriers, and many other bases for a new cultural model based on liberalism that everybody around the globe should enthusiastically -and naively- follow. Business euphoria was everywhere, where money and competition was the air of culture, and being selfish was praised as something good.

In the middle of this, the structural transformation propelled by information technologies emerged, the service sector became dominant over industries and services, and where private big-tech companies became the new landlords.



Now, at this point of the present, our generalized culture feeling is **quite different** from the one of the neoliberal era— a generalized sense of pessimism and preoccupation is almost everywhere,

there is no much of this business euphoria, and in general we -as civilization- don't know anymore where the future is going to take us. After multiple economic crisis, environmental disasters events, big tech scandals, emerging wars, pandemics, mass migration disasters, and generalized lowering standards of living in many western regions, that among other consequences, neoliberal era had brought us— we are realizing slowly that these hole free market ideology package is actually no good.

We can say that now, especially after the great recession and the presidential period of Donald Trump in the United States, the neoliberal era **is over**, and the globalization phase that this brought has ended. At this moment, it seems that we are in a transitional historical phase, a period of indeterminacy, when still this *thatcherite* idea of “there is no alternative” holds, with not visible alternative models in the horizon, but at the same time that this neoliberal package has lost almost all of its legitimacy.

At the geopolitical level, since then, **other powerful players** emerged, questioning the US-led international order— economically, technologically, militarily, and also culturally. Countries like China, Russia, India, Brazil, and many other smaller ones in the global south, are searching to build an alternative global order than the established one, because it brought power abuse, exploitation, underdevelopment, and many other manifestations. In that sense, the geopolitical global configuration is changing, from a unipolar US-ruled system, to a multipolar one, which we still don't know how it's going to manifest, and that will depend on the actions to take.

Also, this order is day to day **manifesting in technology**: production and distribution chains of technology are in a process of decoupling from the previous globalization scheme, and platforms -like social media- are being nationalized or regionalized in scope. In that sense, all of these are following the steps of the new economic wars in between superpowers and regions, which each one accuses each other of trying to undermine the other— technology is not neutral, it responds to higher order power structures and historical processes.

## The big-tech corporate problem

The neoliberal era, and the IT revolution, brought us a new power: **big-tech companies**, that now many decades after, became the dominant economic sector— manifesting themselves in things like social-media platforms, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, financial technology, among others.

Naively, many western techno-neoliberal enthusiasts argued in the past, that this IT revolution and social media platforms, were supposed to bring us a new era of democratization, horizontality, and even to a much better economic equality situation— instead of that, quite **the opposite happened**. In the present, after numerous big-tech corporations related scandals and many decades of **massive concentration of wealth and power**, almost everybody has realized that this is not the case, at the point that even the most pro-establishment groups are seeing the problem behind.

Besides the good things that IT revolution and tech platform brought, we have been experienced systematic problems with this whole idea of corporate tech business companies: that go around abusive market practices, workers exploitation, data privacy scandals, environmental unfriendly practices, unjustified censorship, systematically tax evasion, elections interference, intellectual property over-abuse, disinformation, unaccountable military technology applications, and a lot of more things that we saw and we are still about to see. It is not a coincidence that the reputation of all these big-tech companies is at historic **lows**, even in the United States, and still going down much more in the future.

These practices and dynamics are not caused, nor can be prevented, by good regulation— they are the product of this massive concentration of wealth and power behind these companies, and the perverse incentives that operate behind the structure itself that these companies have.

The problem is evident: what we have today resembles more like a **new feudal system**, that to traditional capitalism itself, in the sense that have become undemocratic unaccountable power structures that rule day to day more and more into the different societies under them.

Countries like China and Russia, have been creating their own big-tech companies to not depend on the United States ones, that with more or less success have been putting a lot of energies into that in the past decade or two. These “eastern” alternatives **are not much better** than their western rivals ones, because they are based on similar wrong ideals and functioning— as being based on very vertical structures, having restrictive and isolated geographical functioning, or keep practicing unsustainable-degenerative practices.

Other regions like the European Union and the global south are almost doing nothing relevant to counteract the big power of these tech corporations and platforms. At most, some legal cases against corporate scandals had happened, with little or no repercussions, such as the numerous times that the European Union had issued warnings and sentences, or the whole Brazil court fight with Elon Musk. These attempts are not bad by itself, they are necessary, but they are not addressing the **structural cause** of what is generating these behaviors and practices, that as we stated, is the whole structural model and culture that constitutes big-tech corporations.

## The current state of social media

Maybe social media, is the perfect example of these destructive capacities of big-tech companies—because clearly they are **destroying the public debate space**—reinforcing polarization, promoting disinformation, incentivizing addictive behavior in users, fomenting negative cultural values, data privacy malpractices, unjustified censorship, and a hold list of similar things that we have been seeing across those years.

Social media in the “west” and the global south is mostly dominated by *Facebook-Meta* services and X -ex twitter- respectively, with other minor ones like *LinkedIn* or *Discord*. Also, other services that are not strictly social media are *Youtube*, *Telegram*, *TikTok*, and others that go around different types of similar services. In the “east” some, and functioning as regionalized restrictive platforms, other companies have emerged, like *WeChat* in China, *VK* in Russia, and other minor ones.

In the last years or so, also some minor alternative social media platforms have emerged, specially ones associated with the **right wing movement** and/or anti-establishment views: like *Truth.social* of Donald Trump, *Rumble* video, or other smaller ones.

Despite the current situation, no positive viable alternative with the capacity of functioning as a possible counter-platform to dominant ones has been created yet. In the meanwhile, socially crucial areas like the public debate, are still being channeled by traditional platforms that are **destroying** and **degrading** day by day this crucial area of society.

## Present public discourse platforms

The public voice in social media is probably the area of society that has acquired the **most importance** in historical and political terms— in the sense that it has become the main channel for news, promoting ideas, organizing social action, debates and discussion, and a lot more socially relevant activities.

There was a huge hope around twenty years ago about how social media platforms were supposed to “democratize” and amplify the public debate. Today, there is probably **no one that still says this**, not even the people that are running these platforms. Reality is quite clear now for almost everyone: these platforms have become a big problem, and until now we don't have a clear solution to them.

In general, at least in the west, we can say that the public debate is channelized mainly by *X* owned by Elon Musk, and *YouTube* owned by Alphabet/Google, that despite being different in forms of content, they have similar proposes— they allow users to create and spread content around millions of people, and in that sense, many use them to share news, publish opinions into topics, do comments, and many other things that are necessarily for a good public debate.

Despite being platforms with important services, and a somewhat good user experience, at the platform-level -beyond the structural inequalities and unsustainable practices that they generate- respectively: they are full of scandals, malpractices, limitations, and most important of all they are all managed by unelected and irresponsible personas.

The case of twitter, now bought by Elon Musk and re-branded as X, is maybe the best case of something that has **become terrible** in almost any sense. Before Musk's purchase, Twitter had been ruled by radical liberal pro-establishment corporate mindsets, that with carefully planned coordination with the US state institutions, were dedicated to banning and censoring anybody that disagreed with those parameters, either from the left and from the right. Now, after the purchase of Elon Musk, Twitter situation is **even worse**, the platform has become a complete disaster: a far-right and Musk's personal agenda propaganda center, full of hate speech, violent manifestations, adult content, bizarre material, and full of systematic practices of a ruling monarch that do whatever he likes. And of course, the unjustified banning didn't stop at all— the platform still has huge

shadow-banning and censorship scandals, lack of transparency, algorithmic biases, and many more things that made the recent massive X's user base dropdown not a coincidence.

YouTube is not far away from criticisms and scandals: that include inconsistent enforcement of rules and censorship, low compensation for content creators and demonetization concerns, advertisement overload, bad recommendation algorithms quality, fomenting addictive behavior, and widespread bot and spams— among many the things that make this platform far from ideal to channelize a positive public debate.

Even with all these massive problems emerging from these platforms, still anything yet has been **capable of replacing** these evident negative and degenerative companies behind these platforms and their respective authorities. At most, as we saw, there are some legislative attempts to tackle some of the most worrying expressions and practices of these companies, but not much to address the structural dynamics behind these organizations.

Efforts to create alternatives are on the way, most of them are not only not in the right direction, but are openly even worse than established platforms, in the sense that they are explicitly trying to create spaces for hateful, violent and discriminatory speech. In the other side, as we already explore, there are some **positive developments** towards good social media platforms, specially in the **software side**, that for example the many developments of the open source movement, like Mastodon, or the extensive good will and energy of many people that are trying to actively collaborate to consolidate alternatives.

In this project, we are committed to contribute **theoretically and practically** to these movements that are trying to do alternatives around many different sectors of the economy— our mission here, starting from the deep historical and geopolitical analysis, is to contribute to the creation of a viable alternative social media microblogging platform.

## The platform

Platforms are across very different sectors of the economy, in the sense that in our present they have become a **crucial infrastructure** to many day to day things— that go from food delivery, house rentals, buying things online, dating, transport, public debate, and many other topics that we depend on as a civilization. Most of the platforms are owned by these private corporations, and many of them instead of being socially positive things, as we already saw, have become destructive in many senses.

For sure, many actions towards creating alternative platforms are needed **across different sectors**, and this projects that is going to be focused into create a concrete alternative into the services that our public debate depend, but at the same time the objective here **goes much beyond**— we will intend to create theory, concrete tools and practical experience that other projects or organizations can take or learn-from for the creation of alternatives platforms.

In that sense, this project, is intended, at least, to create an alternative platform place to X, and if possible later on, also to Youtube— that are the **two main platforms in which public debate is channelized** in the west, mainly, Europe and United States, and in the *global south*, mainly Latin America, Africa, Middle East and some parts of Asia. China and Russia already have their own social media platforms, and are quite restrictive in their digital infrastructure space, so It's not much of a point to focus there at this point.

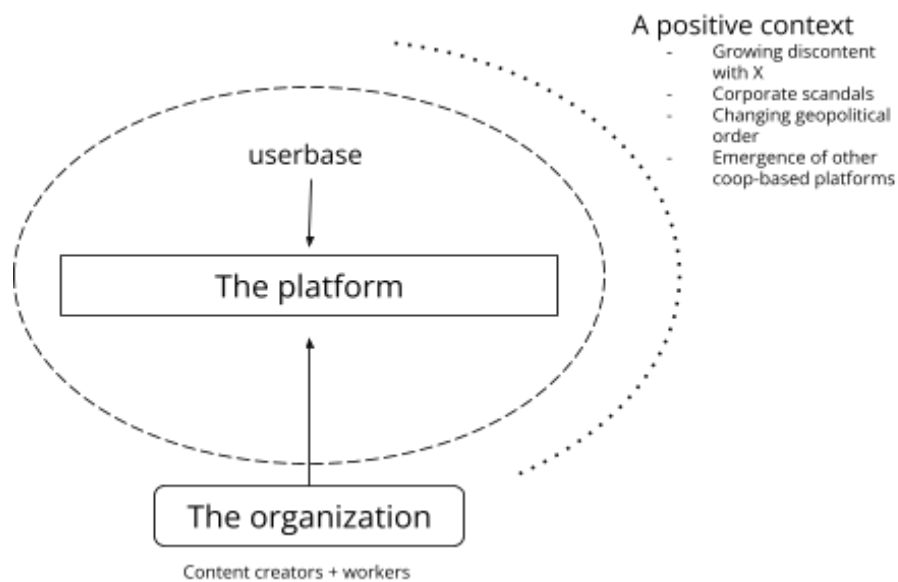
### Towards a microblogging twitter-like alternative

In that sense, we need at minimum, something that resembles a **microblogging platform**: a place where people can create text comments, react, share, follow each other, and communicate by direct messages.

Beyond the infrastructure itself, there is the need to reach a sufficient number of users and content creators for this to be functional, the platform will need to create a solid **community behind**— that can participate, moderate content, impulse funding, and above all maintain the organization itself without corporate rulers.

Doing this is a huge task, and for some it may seem impossible, but is not, in fact today there are multiple factors that make this effort **much easier**, and that we can hope for and innovate to. These

factors go around many different ones— a positive macro-context, already developed software infrastructure, and new organizational models and tools for platform governance.



The first factor to explore, referring to the positive **macro-contextual factors**, is very important, but it goes beyond the mission of this document— these may enhance and promote the platform abilities to scale and solidify. Obviously, we cannot affect any of those directly, because they respond to higher order sociopolitical and historical factors, neither the less we will try to explore and describe some possible lines of action.

The second factor, that we will try to innovate on, is the **model of organizational governance**, based on the principles of **community ownership**— applied to this idea of a twitter-like social network platform. This implies defining legal joint ownership of the platform, defining models of governance, creating digital and real-place participation tools and environments, and many other things that have to do with the structure of the organization and decision-making behind the platform.

The third factor to explore and decide on, is the **software infrastructure** of the platform, that in principle it will try to mimic some of the main the same of Twitter, but with the scope of improving it, and jumping into other public-debate related important services like a streaming and video platform like Youtube— that ideally would be good to have both of these features together in the same



platform. At the start, the idea is to use Mastodon infrastructure for the backend -technology that is already there-, and in addition, we need to create a new front end interphase, which is not so difficult as the backend.

Beyond the conceptual ideas and frameworks, we will try to put thinking into how we can **implement** this concrete platform in the real world. Due to the magnitude of the project, we need to rely on transdisciplinary network-based collaboration of different people and organizations across different regions.

In the next chapters, we are going to explore all of these concepts and topics that have to do with the organizational model, software, macro-context factors, and implementation.

## The organizational model

The organizational model is about how general governance and decision making happens, and which legal structure the platform will have. That in general structures foundations and principles that the organization is taught to have from the beginning.

This is one of the main points that there is the need to pay attention, because a big part of the negative repercussions of corporate platforms has to do with their own organizational structure that they have, and the incentives behind them. As stated, this platform doesn't want to replicate these same destructive practices, and by that, it should be taught and structured in a different way than traditional social media platforms.

One of the most important reference areas that this project is based on, is the one related to the innovation upon the governance and ownership models around the platform. Is intended here, to develop new models that go beyond traditional corporate models, and also from those non-corporate alternative ones that existed in the past. Today many developments in social sciences and organizational studies in general, open the possibility for incorporating and combining different aspects and experiences of various frameworks and organizations.

At this moment of the project, and towards the development of concrete real structure for the platform, are a couple of things to frame and define, that have to do with reference governance

principles, the legal structure of the organization, and also the question regarding how the surplus income of the organization is distributed. Things that more or less every complex organization similar to the one pretended here has, and being unaware of them, can be problematic in the time of decision on how to specifically design a governance model for the platform. So with that objective, in the next pages there is going to be some description and reflections about these aspects.

## Macro-organizational foundations

Foundations refer to abstract principles, values and philosophical perspectives that are consciously or unconsciously **assumed as reference points** for guidance into building a concrete governance model. All organizations have these foundations, which sometimes are just incorporated from broad cultural codes, and some others are more well-taught and developed in a descriptive documentation sense.

## Governance principles

Before and beyond the concrete organizational models and legal structures, it is very important to determine which governance principles the platform has, in the sense that these macro-foundations will open different correct avenues for the development of concrete and evolving governance systems, related in the aspects of decision-making, resource allocation, moderation mechanisms, or revenue distribution.

**Participation:** a core principle of effective governance is the active involvement of people, organizations or stakeholders into the decision-making process. This includes relevant parties, from decision-makers to the broader community, in the decision-making process. Participation ensures that the needs and viewpoints of diverse groups are considered, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to the organization's goals.

**Community engagement:** Effective governance necessitates continuous interaction with the community it serves. This involves understanding community needs, addressing concerns, and fostering an environment where community members feel heard and valued. Community engagement not only strengthens relationships but also helps build trust, loyalty, and support for the organization's mission.

**Efficiency:** making decisions and implementing actions swiftly without unnecessary delays or resource expenditure. Effective use of time, finances, and effort ensures that the organization operates smoothly, allowing for rapid adaptation to changes and a continuous pursuit of strategic goals.

**Larger Vision:** governance should be driven by a long-term perspective, with leaders able to envision future challenges and opportunities. The ability to anticipate future trends, needs, and actions is vital for maintaining sustainability and positioning the organization for success over time.

**Expertise:** For governance to be truly effective, it must be underpinned by the right knowledge and expertise. Decision-making should rely on well-informed perspectives drawn from individuals with experience and specialization in relevant areas. This ensures that policies, strategies, and actions are grounded in knowledge, leading to more effective outcomes.

**Transparency:** Transparency in governance refers to the clarity with which decisions are made and the openness of processes to scrutiny. This ensures that all stakeholders understand how decisions are being reached, fostering accountability, trust, and legitimacy within the organization. Transparent governance is vital in maintaining the confidence of stakeholders and ensuring ethical conduct.

**Glocality:** emphasizes the importance of balancing local needs with global strategies. Governance should take into account both the specific context and challenges of local communities, while also aligning with broader global movements and trends. This creates an adaptive and scalable governance model that respects local diversity while contributing to larger global initiatives, fostering both community empowerment and global cooperation.

**Macro-systemic orientation:** The governance model must not operate in isolation but rather be embedded within and aligned with larger social, political, and institutional systems. This broader integration ensures that the organization's actions and decisions contribute to, and are consistent with, societal goals and structures. It also enhances the organization's ability to influence and be influenced by systemic changes, fostering a more holistic approach to governance.

**Legal structure**

The organization's legal structure can take different forms, that can be more open or closed to ownership, and can include a large number or a more reduced number of people into the decision-making and legal ownership. In that sense there is always a limit of the organization, that determines who has organizational power over decision-making, and also how is the process to include new members.

a. **Widespread ownership:** while it may vary jurisdiction to jurisdiction, basically, this consists of organizations with a governance model that includes into decision-making a variation of a large number of people, stakeholders and sub-organizations. They may include more or less mechanisms or representative elections or direct participation, independent technical or specialized bodies, or many other forms that are in practice around many different organizations already in existence.

This model resembles pure or mixed cooperative-type structures, that in this case for instance, it can imply that content creators could share in governance and profit distribution, resembling a worker cooperative tailored to creative contributions. Alternatively, a broader workforce might collectively own and manage the platform, akin to a general worker cooperative. Another variation could grant affiliated users partial ownership and influence, reflecting a consumer cooperative model. Each approach fosters inclusivity, engaging distinct stakeholders in shaping the platform's operations and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits, but in different ways, and with more or less limitations into the decision-making process.

Also, this model implies elections to who runs the company for specific periods, **digital and physical participation** mechanisms, open debate about content moderation standards.

b. **Limited ownership models:** typically resemble private organizations in their structure, with governance centralized around specific members or boards. These organizations often adopt restricted membership criteria, granting decision-making power only to a select group. Boards, whether elected or appointed, act as the primary authority, determining the strategic direction and managing operations. This approach is akin to the governance frameworks of NGOs or foundations, where inclusivity may vary depending on the organization's mission and structure.

**The platform's benefits question**

The question of ownership structures and income allocation in non-traditional organization, as it shapes the organization's long-term sustainability, governance, and alignment with its mission. Ownership models not only define the legal structure of an organization but also influence how income is distributed and reinvested. Broadly, these models can be categorized as for-profit, not-for-profit, and mixed structures, each offering distinct advantages and challenges.

In a **for-profit structure**, the organization is designed to generate income for its owners, who may include shareholders, workers, users, or other stakeholders as defined by its governance model. A key feature of this model is the distribution of dividends, which serves as a financial incentive for ownership and investment. This structure can attract capital more easily by allowing the sale of shares, offering a pathway for raising funds to scale the platform or invest in innovations. However, the for-profit model risks prioritizing profit generation over user experience, ethical considerations, or the social mission of the platform, potentially leading to conflicts between financial goals and the platform's broader vision.

A **not-for-profit model** reinvests all income into its mission rather than distributing dividends. This model aligns closely with ethical or mission-driven objectives, as resources are entirely dedicated to improving the platform, enhancing user experience, or addressing societal goals. While this structure minimizes the risk of profit-driven compromises, it can limit the organization's ability to raise capital since it cannot offer equity stakes to investors. Consequently, funding often relies on donations, grants, or service fees, which may constrain the platform's growth.

A **mixed ownership structure** combines elements of both for-profit and not-for-profit models, providing greater flexibility. For instance, an organization could operate as a for-profit entity with a cap on dividend payouts, ensuring that a portion of profits is reinvested in the mission. Alternatively, it could adopt a cooperative model, where users or workers own shares but prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term profit. The mixed model allows for creative approaches to governance and funding, potentially balancing ethical commitments with the need for scalability and innovation. However, this structure can also lead to complexities in decision-making and potential disagreements among stakeholders with different priorities.

## The geographical question

Organizations, when they become wide enough, especially at the international level, they can choose how decision-making should be managed across the **different regions** that operate.

The traditional corporate sector, inspired by a pseudo-globalization ideology, works mostly in heavily **vertically centralized manner**, in which the company's headquarters -frequently located in the global north-, **send decisions** made by the CEOs and other bodies of power, to the companies subsidiaries located in other regions. Not only the decision-making is **geographically asymmetric**, but also the **resources flow**, in the sense that the great part of the income generated, goes back to the country of origin, replicating the peripheral-metropolis colonial model.

Some may argue, to make a better world and reverse negative corporate dynamics, we should return to the local sphere, in some sort of deglobalization processes, where decision-making is mostly done at the local level. This is mostly incorrect, in the sense that our present world is heavily interconnected in global chains of problems and production structures— this is even more the case in public discussions platforms, in the sense that debates and diffusion of knowledge and opinions is probably the most interconnected thing that we have as a civilization.

To think out of this destructive asymmetric model of decision-making and resources flow, without finding our way trapped in short-minded localist ideals, we can find answers in the concept of **glocalism**, one that which tries to overcome the traditional dichotomies in between the global and the local, and seek the coordination and integration of different geographical dimensions. This implies finding the right balance of the distribution of power, decision-making, content moderation standards, and resources flow in between the different geographical dimensions— something that will require extensive debates and the use of different frameworks further on.

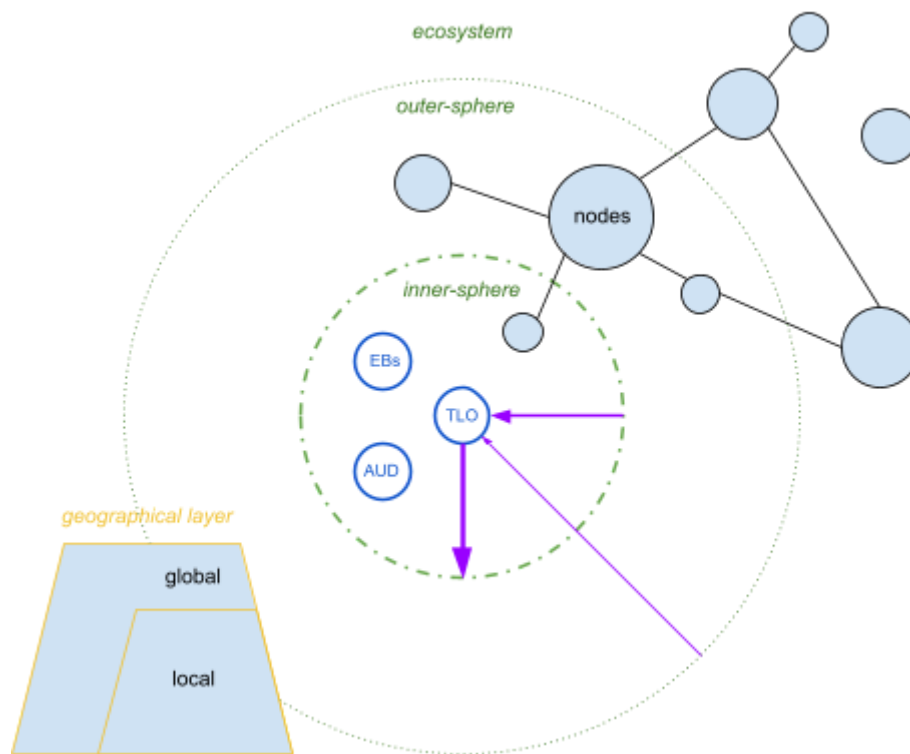
## An abstract governance model

How a concrete governance system will take place is something difficult to design in advance, and even predict how it is going to evolve in time. Nevertheless, there are some **macro-elements at the abstract level** that we can put forward as some basis for a concrete functioning up-to-date governance system of this sort.

For that, we can think here of a different element to have in reference: a) a concrete organizational-governance that structures Top-level, intermediate, and auditory entities and bodies;

b) in reference to multi-layered glocal function-specific layers of governance, c) connected toward different decision-making mechanisms, and d) related different organizational spheres.

In the diagram below it can be observed the possible different spheres of influence, layers, decision-making directions, and network relations.



In that sense, to give rise to a glocal open-participative governance model, there is the need to articulate at least different layers of decision-making, methods of open participation, and diverse conceptualizations related to spheres of influence.

## Levels of governances

The **levels of governance** are theoretical referential abstractions that more or less order how entities and bodies inside an organization are placed, their respective functions, level of autonomy, and their spheres of influence— that are connected by infrastructural mechanisms of communication and decision-making types.

## Top-level organization

The **Top-level organization (TLo)** is the macro-body that deals with **high-level decisions that involve systemic concerns**, and which is integrated with the other more decentralized decision-making entities and bodies.

This body will encompass institutions and aspects related with the board of directors, representative bodies, consultative functions, funding aspects, intertemporal planning sectors, and other macro-issues alike.

It is in general the **most abstract level** of organizational governance, that has the mission of encompassing and following correctly the vision and mission of the organization, in combination with maintaining systematic cohesiveness and well functioning.

This can be for example the elected board of directors, expert consultants with binding powers, or other similar entities that have the mission of implementing decisions that have been done at the whole organization level, or simply guide and steer the bigger vision and mission of the platform.

It usually **defines the legal aspect** of the organization, because national legal infrastructures place which type of organization there is in relation to these elemental macro-level configurations that binds the organization legally. This, due the diversity of legal frameworks, varies from countries or localities in which the platform will be located. By this, the organization may take different legal forms depending on the context— like for example a non-for-profit organization, member-based consumer cooperative association, not-for-profit business, or other similar types that exist or can be created in the future.

## Intermediate entities

The intermediate entities (EBs) are those **decentralized or distributed sub-organizations, sectors and bodies** that have an **important degree of autonomy** to function according to their own functions and objectives, but still will be codependent of the Top-level organization.



These entities are expected to match certain specific functions at different geo-referential levels. And at which participation and general decision making will correspond to the specific intermediate entity.

This can be for example, how moderation happens at the functional level in the platform, that in general does not depend on Top-level structures, because it is a function of the platform's wider community.

### Auditory entities

Auditory entities have the function of **supervising and enforcing internal and external rules, regulations, and general alignments of the organization**. The correspondent mission of these bodies will be **improving transparency and proper organizational cohesive function**. Because even in middle size organizations, there are disagreements, disputes, bad practices, and many other problematic manifestations of complex human organizations.

As any auditory body, it will have to have a high degree of autonomy and independence, but at the same time it should be interlinked with other governance entities and the general organizational macro-vision.

### Decision-making layers

Decision-making layers are abstract ways in which we can **divide powers and capacities of governance**, and that may include very different principles according to the type of organization, their values, their culture, and their history. For example, states usually have geography-based layers of governance, that includes the national, regional, and municipal levels of governance, among other non-geographical layers.

As outlined in the guiding principles, decision-making should align with the concepts of **glocalization, expertise relevance, and general participative representation**. This framework envisions a multi-layered decision-making system that tries to combine context specificity, general efficiency, and community sovereignty.

This approach is characterized by dividing decision-making into distinct layers based on specific criteria. One layer organizes decisions geographically, allowing the organization to address issues on varying scales, from local to global. Reflecting the principle of glocalization, this structure empowers people to make decisions relevant to their local contexts while engaging in broader, macro-level decisions when necessary. Geographical subdivisions may include local, zonal, regional, national, continental, and global levels, ensuring decisions are made at the most appropriate scale to balance local needs with global considerations.

Another layer focuses on functional specificity, centering decisions around areas of expertise, knowledge, or practice. Decision-making related to this layer depends on criteria such as skills, experience, or professional relevance. Examples include expert teams, academic or research fields, or research departments. These function-specific layers ensure that decisions in specialized areas are informed and precise.

A further layer emphasizes broad participation, enabling general participation to influence the overall direction and alignment of the organization. Unlike geographic or function-specific layers, this approach, either direct or based on representative democracy, is not tied to location or expertise but fosters inclusivity by incorporating diverse perspectives into overarching strategies.

In that sense, this layered decision-making framework combines geographic relevance, expertise reference, and broad participation to create a distributed and inclusive process. By integrating these layers, it achieves a balance between local autonomy and global cohesion while ensuring that decisions are participatory, informed, and effective.

## Participation types

Complex institutions, like the networked-organization aimed to be taught here, have many interconnection and communication channels among decision-making. That has objectives and delimitations in the organizational affairs, in the sense that some participation types are just assigned to limited specific entities, and other types of participation can be more broad and unspecific.

This organizational governance under the platform, as stated, is inspired by open-participation and general engagement, combined with expertise and geographical specificity to deal with complexity

in decision-making. Given this, there is the idea to design a system based on at least three different participation types, that can be more specific or more general, and that can be claimed by singular persons or collective bodies as the sovereign agents.

**[direct-participation]** The idea of direct participation is based on an unmediated form of decision-making, that can be brought by direct assigned capacities or voting , here the sovereign agent in reference acts directly, without mediation. Can be for example, a general voting of the moderation community into the decision if some specific user violated the general terms of the platform and should be sanctioned or banned.

**[indirect-participation]** The idea of indirect participation is conceptually based on the idea of representative bodies, in which second level agents, who are elected by sovereign first level agents, with the mission of delegating decision-making power. This can be for example the board of the organization that one in four years goes to a general voting to choose the people in the board of directors that will have the mission of leading the organization according to its general vision and objectives.

**[liquid-participation]** The idea of liquid participation, based on the idea of liquid democracy, combines in different ways direct and indirect participation; by allowing the agents in reference to vote directly on an issue, or delegate votes to somebody that they trust in a certain area that can vote for them, including the capacity to remove the delegation instance if considered.

By allowing these types of differential institutional mechanisms of participation, depending on the area or instance of decision-making, and combined with the utilization of the most developed forms of participative informational technologies; there will be the capacity to deal efficiently with complex and simple decisions in different layers of relevance.

## Organizational spheres

To have reference how the organization relates with itself and with the internal and external world, is always good to have organizational spaces defined, that have to do with the **connection and the capacities that a certain organization have towards different relational spheres**.

For a distributed system to work in this type of intended platform, there will be the need to **assign references points and capacities** in relation to different spheres of influences that agents and the general process of the organization have. In general we can find three different spheres by which an organization interacts: the inner sphere, the other sphere, and the ecosystem.

The **[inner-organizational sphere]** is the sphere that is most related with the organization itself, and is composed by inner entities and agents that form directly part of the organization, and encompasses those people and groups directly part of the functioning and operation of organization. In general are associative members, workers, advisors, board of directors, or other types of staff roles. In general, it is the sphere where agents have the most capacities to make decisions, as they have to deal with day-to-day affairs.

The **[outer-organizational sphere]** is composed of external issues and agents, refers to that area outside of the organization, in which the organization has certain impact or relevance over, and vice versa. In general encompass people, groups, and places that are not-belonging or are not-associated directly to the inner organization. Examples of those can be non-associated or users of a service, state regulators, external labor unions, local communities, and other actors alike that will have an indirect impact in the organization. In general, for being not part of the organization, those actors will have fewer capacities and powers than inner actors; but it is still important to add them to the process of decision-making as a matter of efficiency and sovereignty.

The **[ecosystem]** refers to everything else that is not related with the inner and outer sphere, and in general have minor or no impact into the organizational affairs. Which implies don't paying much attention to creating capacities to engage with agents and events going on there.

### Decision support-system assistance

Though it may sound like an experimental concept, a general assistance system technology, maybe helpful to go beyond some of the limitations of the "human aspect" over the organizational decision-making process.

Recent developments on artificial intelligence, can be applied to develop some sort of **decision support system** with the objective to help general decision-making. Such a system would not only provide evidence-based insights, suggestions, and intuitive visualizations to guide decision-making

but also serve as an interactive platform for logging data or understanding the decisions being made in the meta-analysis sense by others.

By integrating these capabilities, the use of decision support systems can **minimize human error, enhance the quality of collaborative decision-making, and automate repetitive tasks through streamlined processes**. These advancements may open windows to make decision-making more accurate, efficient, and participatory, supporting the diverse needs of users at all levels.

## Software

Software is a very important part of the project, because to be a platform to be functional and innovative, we need to have proper software foundations at the social and technological level.

## Principles and values

Software is not something neutral, nor something without cultural mediation, in that sense, without positive conscious values and principles meant to keep replicating the destructive practices of traditional software-making processes anchored in big private corporations.

We here, as many other people around, believe that it is possible to do software in much better way, and for that we need to be based in positive values and principles that guide the software development— to start, we stay here some of the principle that we think should guide the software-side development of this new social network project.

**Transparency:** The software must be transparent in its operation and in the way it handles data. Users must understand how their data is collected, stored and used.

**Privacy:** Users' privacy must be respected, ensuring that their personal data is used securely and that they have control over who can access it.

**Security:** Software must be secure, protecting data and systems against unauthorized access, cyber attacks and other threats.

**Interoperability:** Services and code should be taught to operate among other services and platforms, leaving the silo-center mentality and embracing concepts like inter-platform communication, user data portability, or cross-community collaboration.

**Impartiality and non-discrimination:** The software must not perpetuate or amplify unfair bias or discrimination towards any group of people.

**Sustainability:** Software development must consider its environmental impact and promote sustainable practices in terms of resource and energy use.

**Collaboration and openness:** Encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing in the software development community, promoting open standards and access to information.

**Legal and ethical compliance:** The software must comply with all applicable laws and regulations, as well as internationally recognized ethical standards.

**Digital Wellbeing:** Promote practices and technologies that support people's digital well-being, including strategies to reduce screen time, manage notifications, and cultivate conscious use of technology.

**Social responsibility:** Consider the broader social impacts of your products and services, including addressing issues such as misinformation, polarization and digital inequality.

## Approaches and Technological Stacks

There are three different software related areas that we need to tackle to build the platform: the backend, the frontend, and the **digital governance infrastructure**.

### The backend

Creating a social network from scratch is a formidable challenge, as it involves addressing technical, social, and economic complexities. Building robust backend systems, designing a user-friendly interface, ensuring scalability, and fostering a vibrant user community all require substantial expertise, time, and resources. Moreover, competing with established platforms

demands innovation and significant effort to attract and retain users while maintaining a sustainable business model.

Luckily, there are some open-source projects like Mastodon that offer a pragmatic starting point. With a mature, well-documented codebase and a supportive community, Mastodon provides foundational features such as user authentication, content sharing, and moderation tools, drastically reducing development time.

### The Mastodon possibility

To pursue a scalable and efficient solution, the most feasible approach would be taking Mastodon's codebase to create a new platform.

Mastodon's current tech stack offers a robust foundation, leveraging Ruby on Rails for its REST API and server-side web pages, React.js and Redux for dynamic interfaces, and Node.js for its streaming API. All technologies backed by active developer communities and extensive resources. These characteristics ease the learning curve and simplify the process of recruiting collaborators.

The ActivityPub protocol, which mastodon implements, underpins decentralized social networking by enabling seamless communication between servers, allowing users across platforms to interact with shared content like posts, follows, and comments. This protocol is fundamental to the Fediverse, a network of federated services where each platform, such as Mastodon, Pixelfed, Threads.net, PeerTube, and Funkwhale, operates independently yet remains interconnected. This decentralized architecture enhances privacy, user control, and freedom, offering an alternative to centralized social media. ActivityPub ensures interoperability while maintaining diverse and autonomous ecosystems, fostering innovation and resilience across platforms.

### The frontend

The frontend of any platform plays a critical role in establishing its identity and shaping the user experience. For a successful MVP (Minimum Viable Product), it is imperative to design a distinctive visual style, including new colors, layouts, and user interface elements, while also making deliberate choices about which features to prioritize or defer.

Mastodon's existing frontend, while functional, falls short in delivering a polished user experience. The platform's development has historically focused on backend robustness, leaving the frontend less refined. Addressing this shortcoming requires rethinking the user interface and experience, exploring options that vary in complexity and scope.

The **simplest approach** involves leveraging modified versions of existing Mastodon themes. While these themes offer some improvements over the default, they often lack completion or finesse, as many are hobbyist projects. As such, they may require additional refinement to serve as a credible alternative.

A **slightly more ambitious strategy** is to create a new theme from scratch, maintaining compatibility with Mastodon's default UI while incorporating fresh stylistic elements. This path strikes a balance between resource constraints and the need for differentiation, making it a feasible choice for smaller teams or early-stage development efforts.

A **more complex option** involves integrating non-Mastodon open-source environments with Mastodon's backend. This approach introduces compatibility challenges but allows the adoption of user interfaces designed with alternative frameworks or paradigms, potentially enriching the user experience.

The **most ambitious and resource-intensive option** entails designing an entirely new user interface tailored to Mastodon's backend. This requires deep expertise in graphic design, a thorough understanding of Mastodon's source code, and significant development resources. However, this approach offers unmatched flexibility and the opportunity to craft a truly unique and optimized user experience.

By carefully evaluating these options, teams can develop a frontend that not only meets functional needs but also establishes a compelling and distinctive identity, ensuring a strong foundation for future growth and user engagement.

## Digital governance tools

Beyond in-place participation, like assemblies or conferences, For a community run-platform based on global participation at different levels, there is the need to have some **governance software**



behind it, that enables decision-making around many different topics, across different regions, and including many people and organizations.

These participatory governance platforms offer a transformative approach to engaging communities, fostering transparency, and enabling collaborative decision-making. A social media-inspired environment, like a Twitter-style platform, can integrate governance tools to facilitate meaningful participation while ensuring accountability and inclusivity. To achieve this, such systems must prioritize features that enhance user engagement, transparency, and the efficiency of decision-making processes.

Participation tools are at the heart of any effective digital governance platform. These tools empower users to contribute to decision-making through mechanisms such as polls, surveys, and petitions. By enabling the community to collaboratively draft and refine proposals, the platform creates a sense of ownership and shared responsibility among participants. This inclusivity ensures that a diverse range of voices are heard, fostering a culture of co-creation.

Transparency is another cornerstone of participatory governance. To build trust, platforms must provide clear visibility into actions, decisions, and user contributions. Public activity logs and open data sharing enable communities to hold decision-makers accountable while promoting informed participation. This level of openness not only enhances trust but also encourages users to engage more deeply with the platform.

A robust governance system must also address the challenges of moderation and content control. Platforms need mechanisms to manage abuse, misinformation, and other harmful behaviors without undermining free expression. Community-driven moderation, where users participate in reviewing and adjudicating disputes, can be an effective approach to maintaining a balanced environment.

Equally important is the incorporation of deliberative and decision-making tools. Structured forums allow for constructive discussions, ensuring that decisions are made with input from multiple perspectives. Voting mechanisms, ranging from simple majority rules to ranked-choice voting, can adapt to different contexts, ensuring fair and democratic outcomes. Incentives, such as gamified rewards or reputation systems, further encourage constructive engagement and positive contributions.

For platforms that aim to integrate governance features into a social media-like environment, interoperability is vital. Seamless integration with APIs of popular platforms can bring broader audiences into participatory processes, leveraging the familiarity and reach of existing networks.

### Some possibilities

Also here, open-source software offers powerful and cost-effective solutions for building participatory governance systems from the beginning. Among the most notable options are:

Decidim, a comprehensive digital democracy platform, stands out for its modular design and rich functionality. Initially developed by the Barcelona City Council, Decidim supports participatory budgeting, citizen proposals, and collaborative editing, making it ideal for structured governance processes. Its emphasis on transparency and accountability aligns closely with the principles of democratic engagement.

Loomio, a lightweight platform focused on consensus-building. With its user-friendly interface, Loomio is particularly suited for small to medium-sized communities looking for tools to facilitate discussions and make decisions collectively.

Polis takes a unique approach to participation by analyzing large-scale conversations. It uses AI to identify consensus areas and visualize diverse opinions, making it an excellent choice for understanding community sentiment and fostering mutual understanding.

CiviCRM offers tools for campaign management, event planning, and stakeholder engagement. It is particularly useful for participatory campaigns that require extensive coordination.

Consul provides a scalable solution for participatory governance, offering features like collaborative proposal drafting and secure voting mechanisms. Its widespread adoption by cities and institutions globally is a testament to its effectiveness.

The Flowback platform aims to combine traditional democratic practices with modern tools like neural networks and blockchain technology. It features modules for deliberation, secure decision-making, and implementation, including quadratic voting, delegation, and prediction

markets. Designed for inclusivity and transparency, it offers tools such as video meetings, structured discussions, anonymous voting, and Kanban boards for task management.

When selecting a platform, scalability is critical to ensure it can handle large user bases and high levels of interaction. Data privacy and security must also be prioritized, particularly when handling sensitive user data. Open-source solutions excel in this regard, offering transparency and flexibility while adhering to regulations such as GDPR.

Modularity and community support further enhance the appeal of open-source tools, allowing for customization and ongoing improvements. Platforms with active developer and user communities benefit from regular updates, better documentation, and a wealth of shared resources.

By leveraging open-source digital governance software, participatory platforms can create environments where users feel empowered to engage, contribute, and influence decisions. These systems not only strengthen democratic practices but also promote a sense of community and shared purpose, making them invaluable in the quest for inclusive and effective governance in the digital age.

## Closing remarks

This project is an open collaborative initiative that is open for new collaborators to join, so the network behind it may expand as the process continues. More people and expertise, means more capacities to succeed.

In this first version, the project is still in its generic form, in the sense that it is in a prototype mode, that doesn't have a legal organization behind, nor a concrete brand name. Things that have to be decided later on in the second phase.

Also, as an on-going live development is going to be in permanent edition, that implies that will have constant modifications, new additions, expanding in what is already there, improvement on graphics, and many other things for the improvement of it.