

MEASURING OPINIONATED COMMUNICATION

THREE SHOCK WAVES DISRUPTING PUBLIC SPHERES

When digital shocks shake the foundations of public deliberation, trust fractures and participation freezes.

IDEALS OF PUBLIC DELIBERATION

Participants shall be able to



express themselves freely



trust that expressed views are informed and sincere (Habermas, 1991)

THREE OBSERVABLE DISRUPTIONS



People communicate uncivilly and intolerantly



False and strategically misleading information circulates



Content and personae are fake(d)



SHOCK WAVE 1: INCIVILITY (since the 1990s)

- The transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 came with hate speech, trolling, and flaming
- Incivility has remained persistent across platforms

Consequences:
chilling and silencing effects on opinion expression



SHOCK WAVE 2: DISINFORMATION (especially since 2016)

- Actors take advantage of lost gatekeeping monopolies
- Deliberate and coordinated disinformation circulates

Consequences:
undermined confidence in truthfulness of claims, institutional credibility
→ second freezing effect on participation



SHOCK WAVE 3: GENAI & AUTOMATION (especially since 2022)

- Questions what is real (authorship & utterance)
- Misleads about how relevant and prevalent opinions truly are

Consequences:
generalized suspicion, reduced engagement, distorted perceptions of public opinion



FOCUS POINT (HYPOCENTER)

Socio-technical changes in digital media emerge below the surface.



SEISMIC WAVES

Shock waves propagate outward, shaking and reshaping the terrain of public discourse.



FAULT(S)

Structural tensions build up, creating fractures in the communication landscape.



AFTEREFFECTS

Polarization, fragmented publics, erosion of trust, and a frozen willingness to engage.

THE GOAL: REBUILD TRUST AND RECONNECT PUBLIC SPHERES



Restore trust



Enable respectful and informed dialogue



Rebuild a resilient, inclusive public sphere

Visualization created with the assistance of ChatGPT. Irony intended.