

Digitization and AI in the transformation of power relations

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Abstract

Historical existence evolved with urbanisation, and is characterised by important properties, such as the presence of a nobility, literacy, a historical awareness, division of labour and others. While after 1776 it seemed that historical existence can be possible without a nobility, we now live in post-democratic societies which are ruled by a new nobility. Its members fluctuate, but generate a collective political will that can be studied in the publications of globalist institutions. Ruling modern societies via the four classical power modes – power of action, instrumental power, authoritative power, and data-setting power – is difficult due to the massive complexity of industrial societies and the interdependencies of its various highly specialised functions. Digitisation and applied mathematics (so-called artificial intelligence, AI) can be used to enhance the rule over modern societies. With the growing intensity of global rule, competition among the members of the new nobility and resistance from those who are not able to sufficiently participate in the distribution of goods and in the political will formation will increase.

1 Power and rule today

Stable societies are based on mutual mistrust (Max Scheler) and anonymous relationships governed by formalised and informal social norms (Max Weber). They emerged roughly five thousand years ago with the evolution of towns in which, in contrast to villages, social relations cannot be established and maintained via personal acquaintance and the spontaneous interactions of individuals, but require public institutions to function. Such societies mark the beginning of the ‘historical existence’ [33], and they have the following important characteristics: Centralised, bureaucratic rule, the nobility as ruling class, literacy and a historical awareness (and historians), a state religion with public rituals, division of labour, as well as education and science. Centralised rule and a monopoly on violence are necessary to ensure that social norms are followed [52, p. 29].

Urbanisation, the development of towns and cities, was enabled by the neolithic revolution. Ever since urbanisation set in, there had to be a city-state ruled by the nobility and clergy or both in unity (in theocratic societies) to maintain internal order and peace

and achieve defence against foreign aggressors. Later, we see the emergence of powerful noblemen using their domestic power to conquer and govern more than one town and dominating entire regions and countries. Around the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C., imperial structures such as the Assyrian, the Babylonian empire and the Xia dynasty (\approx 2070-1600 B.C.) arose.

Considering the integral over the life time of citizens of urbanised societies until the late 19th century, much more than 99% of the total human life years were spent under the rule of the aristocracy. The only exception were short periods of Republicanism in Greece and Rome, albeit only with roughly a third of the male population (or less) participating. Over the last two hundred years, it seems that this property of the historical existence, the rule by the nobility has been abolished. *But has it?*

We shall see that the period in which the principles of the Bourgeoisie's metaphysics of the Republic, its political philosophy, and the classical ideas of the market economy were realised to a certain extent was short, and that we live in a society ruled by the nobility once more, though its nature has changed due to various factors. Note that what follows does not describe planned events, but the spontaneous evolution of Western societies.

In the USA, representative democracy was geared towards a rule by the new post-colonial (post 1776) elite from the very start [25]¹. As capitalism and industrialisation evolved during the 19th century, huge fortunes were created and led to the emergence of the 'robber barons' and large corporations with oligopolies or monopolies, an evolution which Thorstein Veblen described as 'absentee ownership' without social responsibility and 'sabotage capitalism' aimed at optimising revenues via inflation and amalgamation [51, 50].²

These fortunes were based on oligopolies which evolved due to economies of scale in the sectors of commodities (such as oil, gas, metals), energy and trade, agriculture, transportation and logistics and many other business domains. Veblen, the first serious non-Marxist critic of capitalism, also realised that this new ultra rich class of plutocrats took advantage of its economic and financial power to obtain a decisive influence on political decision making. He postulated that the goal of the ultra-rich absentee owners was to ultimately dominate politics and to rule the country via controlling all relevant institutions of the republic, the magistrates, the leaders of the legal system (public prosecutors and judges) as well as the elected politicians. The 20th century can be seen as a history of the consolidation of the power of these plutocrats at the expense of the associations of small businesses, the trade unions and the numerous other institutions of the civil society.

The civil society as understood by John Dewey, for example, developed since the 17th century in the UK, continental Europe and the US to represent the political interests

¹In Europe the evolution from absolutism to republics and then to post-republican states is more complicated as constitutional orders had mixed characteristics with a strong influence of the nobility during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The republican phase was therefore shorter in Europe than in the US.

²One of the purest examples of sabotage capitalism are share repurchases by which profits are given to the shareholders and increasing ownership concentration at the expense of customers and the workforce.

of the emerging Bourgeoisie, the public servants, the non-owning employees, the clerks, the artists, the free professions, and the labour class against the nobility and later to enable a broad national participation in the republican political will formation. Today, the civil society has lost a lot of its ability to influence the political will formation and the ultra-rich families constitute the new nobility of the sphere of the US hegemony, the Western hemisphere. Not only do they dominate all national and global markets in terms of ownership [35, 32, 17], but they also rule politically. Kotkin [23] describes this as neo-feudalism, though this expression does not do justice to the historic feudalism and its structures of mutual dependency and obligations [31]. Crouch [9] calls it post-democracy, and Streeck [46] globalist rule. This social and political phenomenon is obvious in the West and we have to face it in a neutral, composed manner.

1.1 The new nobility and its style of rule

The power base of the new nobility is its immense wealth which arose via the spontaneous process of capital accumulation (in the sense of Nitzan and Bichler [32]). While it is almost impossible to trace the net of property structure of these families [4, p. 337], it is estimated that a few hundred families now own up to half of the total means of production in the West, and in addition to that possess huge shares in international companies of all sectors of the economy from the primary to the tertiary sector in Asia, Oceania, and Africa [35, 18]. Since the 1980s, huge parts of the public sector shares in the economy have been privatised, and much of these assets have ended up with the top one per mill. Western economies are now thoroughly de-industrialised and financialised, which means that they are dominated by the financial sector and its service industries. Banking, insurance, and real-estate form what Hudson [18] calls the ‘finance-insurance-real-estate (FIRE) rentier economy’. This FIRE economy favours rent extraction over productivity gains and industrial production, it is the aggregated form of sabotage capitalism - and indeed, we have observed a long term decline in productivity growth in the West, which has been close to null over the last ten years [34], in total contradiction to what the neoclassical school of economics would expect [39].

Ninety percent of the Western population are life-long debtors to those who own the FIRE sector and obtain rentier-incomes from providing loans to the rest of the population. Only a tiny fraction of the 90 percent has the chance to obtain some property. In proportion to this dichotomisation of society, we observe a new pauperism in the West with an increasing rate of homeless people, children growing up without adequate protection, care and nutrition. We see a broad and entrenched, increasing impoverishment of now up to 20 percent of Western populations who are falling well below the living standards of the 1960s. In cities like Los Angeles or San Francisco, 19th century Manchester-like conditions reemerge.

At the same time, a tiny fraction of the upper 10 percent, one per thousand of the population, control most of the productive wealth. Among these families, those who are politically active have systematically influenced and lobbied the core institutions of Western republics since the 1920s. The main mechanisms of influence are: Public donations, founding of schools, universities, churches and other educational and cultural

institutions giving them huge influence on science, culture, and education. Vote-enabling donations to all elected political officials (legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government), founding and funding of huge so-called philanthropic NGOs and their campaigns as well as control of both the classical media *and* new media (internet, we will look at the details below). The influence on the education and culture systems and the media enable an impressive control of the population. In addition, an aspect which is often overlooked, this minority provides loans to governments via government bonds in combination with the ability to set interest rates via the FED, which is privately owned by ultra-rich families and effectively sets the interest rates of the Western hemisphere. All of this allows massive control of government decisions.

Since the end of the age of the World Wars (1914-1945), which the richest families financed to a large extent and from which they obtained huge gains via the war-related industries (commodities, metallurgy, armament, weapons, chemicals, clothing, pharmaceuticals, etc.) in which they had important shares, the plutocrats have obtained more and more control over the Western hemisphere. This process was massively accelerated with the end of the Bretton-Woods system in 1971 when the US-dollar was freed of its coupling to gold. Since then, the concentration of wealth has massively accelerated via mechanisms described, for example, by the Austrian-school of economics [38, 10, 19] and the historian of economics Hudson [18]; the details go beyond the scope of this text. Today, the control of the relevant public opinion, the governments and the magistrates of the West by plutocrats is so complete that the Western republics still display the signs of republicanism, but have lost a lot of their substance. Currently (2004) some of them, such as Brazil, are already openly totalitarian; they have abolished free speech and imprison peaceful dissidents.

The two most fundamental intellectual foundations of the Bourgeois, anti-feudal impetus are: The free market economy and the republican political metaphysics. The latter mainly consists of natural law (nowadays called ‘human rights’), the rule of law with isonomy, true pluralism, and democratic participation via voting and the so-called civil society, which practically means corporatism (interest groups, small business organisations, trade unions etc.), and the Westphalian order of international law. All of these ideals were never fully realised, but now these foundations are in steep decline, as illustrated by the following examples³.

- In all domains in which economies of scale can be gained, we now have oligopolistic and oligopsonistic markets. There are still many producers, but the market structures and prices are determined by the giant corporations, the financial sector, regulation which is often in the favour of the two latter, and the interest-rate setting activities of the FED. Aggregated bottom-up supply and demand still exist, but they are bent by the oligopolistic and oligopsonistic supply and demand structures.
- Natural law (human rights) have been disrupted during the COVID-project, and though this was a temporary restriction, we now face a long-lasting and intense

³More comprehensive presentations can be found, for example in [18, 9, 23, 45, 46]

legislative and executive limitation of one of the most important human rights, free speech, everywhere in the West. In legislative terms, it is introduced via laws such as the EU's Digital Services Act, the Kids Online Safety Act in the US, the Canadian Online Harms Act (with very long or life long imprisonment for verbal dissidents) and the Online Safety Bill in the UK. Social media have been censored before these laws were passed, as was revealed in 2022 [47].

- The Westphalian order of international law is not respected anymore since the end of the Cold War, neither by the United States and its allies nor by Russia or China (to whom none of the republican characteristics apply).

In other words, *after a brief republican intermediate period, we now live in a phase of classical historical existence again, including the nobility component.* We are ruled by the new nobility of the modern industrialised age, but it differs from the nobility of the agricultural area (up to the beginning of the industrial revolution), by three distinctive characteristics.

1. The owner class holding power is invisible. Until about 1880 this class was publicly visible. In feudalism and absolutism the upper nobility itself staffed the rulers, who were also the owners of all the relevant property [21], and they appointed the magistrates (with some exceptions, e.g. in the free imperial cities). Everyone knew who the owner-rulers were, and their identity was crucial for the stability of their rule ('The King is dead, long live the King!', Kantorowicz). But now, we have republics preoccupied with realising the interests of a tiny minority of owners under the pretense of republicanism [46] without the public knowing who the owners are and how they make their decisions. We only see the acts of the politicians and magistrates acting on their behalf.
2. Another important difference is that unlike the noble rulers of the feudal and absolutist age, today's ruling class uses a very thin ideology of domination, postmodern collectivism, which has a much lower degree of cultural differentiation than previous ideologies of rule such as the systems of Marsilius of Padua (*Defensor pacis*), Jean Bodin (*Les six livres de la République*) or Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*), let alone Bourgeois metaphysics of the political (consider Immanuel Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, section: *Doctrine of Right*). Overall, their appreciation of the role of traditional, spontaneously evolved culture is low and may diminish stable rule in the sense of Machiavelli unless it is revised and lifted to an elaborate standard more in line with cultural expectations.
3. The rule of today's nobility is more irregular than the rule of feudal lords or absolutist monarchs. Plutocratic families like the Rockefellers or the Rothschilds [11] have tremendous assets and political influence, but they do not rule like the Habsburger, the Hohenzollern, the French Bourbons, or the British branch of the House of Hanover. *Importantly, we clearly see that there is a global agenda of political domination in the West, but we do not know how the will formation within the elite*

that leads to this agenda occurs. It can be assumed that their collective political will is formed in an international fashion and with varying influence and degree of each family's contribution. The group of powerful families and individuals also changes more dynamically than in feudalism and absolutism because technological progress enables the creation of large fortunes in shorter time intervals, though only for a very few individuals, such as tech company founders. Also, the mechanisms by which this will formation translates into legislation and executive activities of governments is more concealed than, for example, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The net effect of the will formation of the new nobility, however, is clearly visible. It can be summarised as *globalism, global governance, or rules-based international order* (which is not the international law established in the UN charter). It can be studied in the United Nation's agenda 2030 or the agenda proposed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) [42, 43]. The publicly visible organs of the new nobility's rule in the West are institutions such as the US government, the WEF, the Bank of International Settlements (BIS), the FED (which is privately owned by leading members of the new nobility), the G30 group of bankers and financial experts, huge investment funds such as Blackrock and Vanguard, but also sovereign investment funds such as the Norwegian fund managing the profits from fossil fuel exploitation, the EU Commission, NATO, the C40 group of leading global cities, the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Conference, or the United Nations Climate Change Conference series. Though some of them have a democratic legitimation via election (the US government), most of them have no foundation of the power they hold in Bourgeois political metaphysics and the procedures derived from it at all.

In 1949, the German psychiatrist and existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers published a book entitled 'The Origin and Goal of History' [20], in which he claimed that 'what we call history and which now ended in its classical sense, was an intermediate moment of 5000 years between the prehistorical period of hundreds of millennia of the peopling of the earth and today's beginning of world history.' His idea was that rationalism and technology have led to a new age of global history. His teacher Martin Heidegger agreed: He called the emerging new global order 'planetarism' and despised modernism, rationalism, technocracy, mass culture and consumerism which he called the 'rule of the anonymity'⁴. *But Jaspers was wrong, the nature of the historical existence has not changed.* The drive of rulers to conquer and dominate ever greater empires was rather unaltered over the last five thousand years, and neither has the fierceness of competition among them fuelling conflicts and wars. And the rulers again constitute a new type of nobility. However, the means of the exertion of power have drastically improved since the Assyrian empire, which now enables them to strive for global rule.

1.2 Ruling modern societies

Rule is the permanent and stable exertion of power. What is power? For Hobbes, the totality of power is identical with the notion of the possibilities to act. Power brings

⁴'Herrschaft des Man', an elegant pun in German.

about a differentiation of realizing such possibilities. For what is fundamentally possible for everyone, cannot be possible for everyone at the same time. Therefore, resources used to influence future events in one's own interest are limited. This leads to a conflict for limited resources. The conflict over resource usage is the fundamental character of politics (Hobbes [16, sect. 1-131, 3-74, 3-313]). Building on this Weber defines power as the 'chance to impose one's own will even against resistance, independently of the source of this chance'. Rule is the 'the chance to obtain obedience for an order of a certain content from a well-defined group of persons.' [52, p. 19].

According to the Weberian sociologist Popitz [36], in urbanised societies, there are four forms of power:

1. *Power of action.* This is the most basic form of power, the usage of violence to injure or kill others. Humans invent weapons and create organisations for collective fighting. Based on these, humans can always threat each other with death, with a whole scale of threats below killing.
2. *Instrumental power.* This power results from threats and promises of reward. Obedience is rewarded, disobedience punished by the reduction of freedom up to imprisonment or the death penalty. It is effective due to fear of punishment and hope for reward.
3. *Authoritative power.* Due to their need for authority, human beings internalise social norms to such extent that they comply with them of their own account (Max Weber). The norms do not have to be enforced by the rulers, but are internalised by the subjects. This requires deep *consuetudo*, and example is the validity of the Ten Commandments in Western culture. A counterexample is the lack of acceptance of alcohol prohibition in the 1920s (*dissuetudo*), which exemplifies that neo-norms are can usually not gain acceptance via authoritative power. Max Weber conceptualised the ultimate form of internalised authoritative power as the 'shell of steel of submission' and saw it as characteristic of modern societies with division of labour and high degrees of specialisation requiring the rigorous adherence to complex social norms in factories, the administration, and multiple activities of modern life.
4. *Data-setting power.* Object-mediating power built into technology such as water supply design, road and railroad path design, city settlement pattern design, and border fortifications such as the Roman limes – this type of power can guide the perception and behaviour of the ruled subjects over centuries.

When applied by a group of persons of a society in consistent fashion, these forms of power lead to rule, the ability to reliably obtain obedience from others.

How can these powers be enhanced by digitisation and so-called artificial intelligence (AI)? To understand this, we need to consider the mode of civilisation in which we live first.

1.2.1 The nature of industrial societies

We live in a highly condensed civilisation which has urban centres of trade and decision making with many inhabitants per square mile and a very strong interdependency of the individuals via division of labour. The industrial societies that enable our civilisation are characterised by high, continuously increasing energy consumption, a total penetration of society by the state through institutions, technology and regulation, global capitalism with fictitious currency and partial reserve or digital central bank money (new BIS model), mass consumption, optimised processing of all internal and external data, and an economic system geared towards rent extraction. Since the 1820s, when the steam engine was introduced, we have created a technosphere with mechanisation, electrification, technical use of chemicals, industrial mass production, mass mobility with fundamental change in the settlement patterns and infrastructure, non-interactive mass media (newspaper, radio, film, television, video on demand), pharmaceutical industry, health technology and biotechnology, robotics, automation, nanotechnology, digitalisation, and interactive media (web, social media) [15].

Thanks to the ubiquitousness of technology, to some it may seem that ruling such societies via controlling the masses has become easier than before. *But has it?* Today, though the nation states as the institutional set and source of political will formation have faded and are replaced more and more by the transnational will formation of the new nobility, they are still the places of the exertion of power [46]. Ruling modern societies is hard and requires a broad and deeply layered, highly specialised bureaucracy for the following reasons [14].

Essential properties of industrial societies are: a massive complexity of communication, transport and logistics, a high degree of interdependency for basic supply of essential goods (water, food, energy, basic medical care), a total dependence on public infrastructure of most citizens, no autarky of their individual citizens, an extreme level of division of labour, specialization and supply chain complexity.

Furthermore, due to chronic mass migration, modern Western societies face a Balkan-like cultural heterogeneity leading to a massive conflict of interest potential, impossibility of unanimity or strong consensus. There is a necessity to compensate spontaneous agreement by legislation and law enforcement. We have a deeply layered opaque technology requiring regulation. The short-term mass need fulfilment by the politicians thwarts long-term sustainable state activity, which leads to financial crises (social security systems, public spending), and simple cause-effect models which drive policy very inadequately given the massive complexity. Against this background, mass communication via social media makes populations prone to collective emotionality that may be hard to control. Overall, industrial mass societies are much harder to rule than agrarian societies [14]. In modern societies, there is a high rate of social change and essential instability.

The question how to rule such societies is therefore complicated and has become more acute over the last 30 years in the West. Why is this the case? Peaceful, positive rule is mostly conveyed by authoritative as well as positive data-setting and positive instrumental (rewarding) power⁵, a recourse to negative instrumental power or power of

⁵Positive data-setting power are public infrastructure measures regarded as beneficial, such as well-

action is expensive and indicates instability.

In industrialised societies, such positive rule is based on material wealth for the masses, a public sphere that conforms with the cultural expectations of the citizens, and, most importantly, a shared sense of the legitimacy of the democratic order [12], especially among the leadership class who lead the private and public administration, education and culture (the ‘outer party’ in Orwell’s *1984*).

All three core foundations of rule have declined in the West since 1970: The economic dichotomisation and the wealth reduction initiatives of global governance bodies (mainly the agenda to reduce energy consumption and agricultural output, called ‘green agenda’) has created a new layer of destitute masses who see that their level of participation in the overall economic output is too low and who have no chances of improving their situation. Mass migration and the FIRE economy have led to a decline of the public sphere: The infrastructure and public environment in all bigger towns and cities of Western countries have declined over the last 30 years and become dysfunctional and derelict. The legitimacy of the democratic order is constantly declining, a process that can be gauged by the share of votes obtained by populist parties that have a proportional voting system (the situation in the US and UK is more complicated) as well as the increasing frequency and violence of protests in the West. The dissenters are not only members of the underclass, but also among the highly educated.

Because the foundations of positive rule are eroding, we see more and more negative authoritative, data-setting and instrumental power.

2 Digital power

This analysis of digital power uses Popitz power typology. Taking power of action aside, for which digitisation and AI can be used in all modalities of warfare, we focus on the other three forms of power described by Popitz because for most citizens, these are more relevant in everyday life.

2.1 Instrumental power

Let’s begin with instrumental power, which consists of the conditioning of humans via positive and negative reinforcement of behaviour. As Bentham [1] recognised, the observation of the citizens is a critical pre-condition for instrumental power. He imagined power over inmates of institutions and described a panopticon that would allow the observation of the institutionalised persons. A total observation, he reasoned, would allow control of their perception, movement (we would say behaviour), which should be intensified by a control of their bodies, and enable rewards for conforming and punishment of non-conforming behaviour.

Since Napoleon set up the first modern tyranny in France after taking power in 1799, he was obsessed with observation [8]. But it was difficult. Though he build up a modern

maintained roads and sewage systems. Positive instrumental power are measures that reward the norm-abiding citizens, such as tax reliefs for families, or health insurance contribution reductions for a healthy life style.

domestic secret service, it was impossible to create a water-tight surveillance system because the complexity of French society at the time was too high to see every deviation and it is difficult to make sure that every employee of the secret police is perfectly loyal. Can observation be improved using digitisation and AI?

Modern digitisation is primarily provided by mobile internet devices which connect the user to the internet all the time. These devices allow the localisation of each individual, the tracing of their movement patterns, but also the constant processing of their choice of contents and the speech acts they utter via speaking, video or the production of texts. If human agents supervise these data from an individual or groups of individuals, the observation density is even higher than in Bentham’s panopticon. Today, such agents are not only provided by secret services , but also by service-providers of the state. These comprise all internet communication platforms (from small to large) because they have been forced to censor so-called ‘misinformation’ via legislation in all Western states. Furthermore, NGOs, so called fact-checkers, who are remunerated by public funds in many countries, are supervising publications on the internet. In this manner, digitisation enables a very dense observation of human behaviour, including speech acts. The only way to avoid this is to not use electronic devices. However, crucially, an automated observation using machines is only possible to a very limited extent. This is due to the essential limitations of so-called Artificial Intelligence (AI). *Which limitations?*

2.1.1 The essential limits of AI

It is impossible to create machine intelligence because we cannot create mathematical models of living systems that display intelligent behaviour. Intelligence is the ability to spontaneously and rapidly find a solution to a novel problem which the individual has not encountered before and for which it was neither prepared nor trained. The solution must be meaningful to the intentions of the individual [44, 41]. We do not know how this behaviour, that can be observed in higher animals, arises, we have no understanding which properties of biological neuronal systems cause it and how they cause it [24]. To make artificial intelligence, we would have to create synoptic mathematical models of living systems displaying intelligence or at least of the neuronal systems from which this behaviour emanates. We cannot do this because these are complex systems.⁶ This limitation is essential and will not recede or vanish.

Furthermore, it is also impossible to model human language understanding [24, ch. 10]. When AI-automata, also the most advanced, the so-called large language models (LLM), process human language for purposes of observation, they identify language patterns as pertaining to certain classes of meaning. When they do this, they misclassify patterns which were not present in the example data which were used to create the models. Humans can create language patterns of arbitrary variance, including coded, self-invented languages. Human language production is a non-ergodic process yielding patterns that are always novel. Recording past language examples never enables an adequate interpretation of future language. Furthermore, what the state sees as misinformation dynamically changes. Therefore, the configuration of AI-based language interpretation can

⁶Landgrebe and Smith [24] give details in chapters 7–9.

never keep up with the evolution of language of society and the changing censoring requirements. For example, a censoring tool, the so-called moderation API [26] used by chatGPT to ensure political correctness (avoid ‘undesired content’) of the output achieved a classification accuracy of 94% and 84%, respectively, for the simple categories sexual content and ‘hateful content’, but the accuracies for self-harm and harassment were poor.

Even worse, the interpretation of video material, which is very popular on the internet, using AI is completely impossible because the machine cannot interpret communication (language and non-verbal communication pragmatics [24, ch. 10]) at all. This will not change.

Therefore, while digitisation radically changes the possibilities to observe individuals, the observation work still has to be done by humans, thus limiting the quantity of material that can be brought under control, while a deluge of material is created every second on the internet. Indeed, only censorship in many cases still requires so-called content moderators in the loop.

Because of the essential limitations of mathematical modelling, in the remaining text, I use the more neutral term ‘algorithm’ rather than ‘AI’. *How about the possibilities to automatically reward and punish?* As the Chinese social credit system shows, there is a very high potential to automate such a system of behavioural conditioning by linking individual behaviour scores obtained from observation to digital payment or taxation systems, for example. It can be concluded that digitisation massively enhances the breadth and depth of instrumental power, while AI has only a rather weak impact on it.

2.2 Authoritative power

Authoritative power is mostly established via socialisation in the families, the education system, youth organisations, and peer groups [7, 36]. Institutionalised culture such as churches, the opera, theater, cinema, as well as the classical unidirectional and the social media. Socialisation establishes social norms and a value system in the individuals. These individual configurations of values and norms are highly depended on their social provenance and culture. In addition to socialisation, all modern states use indoctrination to shape the views of the citizens via the education system, media, and culture. In permissive societies which allow a broad range of individual values and views, indoctrination is of minor importance.

But today, we see massive indoctrination in the entire Northern hemisphere. Western states try to indoctrinate their populations to accept and agree to new values and propositions that have not emerged via a spontaneous process, but were invented and established in a centralised fashion. Very often, the contents are presented in the form of propaganda. Examples are topics such as transgender, climate emergency, or viral pandemics. The global COVID vaccination campaign, for example, was hailed and praised using massive positive propaganda, and groups unwilling to get the vaccination were stigmatised using negative attributions. This is classical indoctrination to modify the contents of authoritative power in consciousness of the individuals.

All of these topics concern contents that are hard or impossible to observe by the

individuals in their every-day life, therefore they do not spontaneously enter the consciousness of average citizens, and do not spread in the societies on their own. Rather, they are systematically created, financed, and actively circulated. Such indoctrination leads to a significant change of attitudes and the balance of personal values which form the individuals' foundation when evaluating alternatives to act and choosing behavioural patterns [40]. But how high is the impact of digitization and AI on the shaping of the individuals' attitudes and values?

2.2.1 Limited support

Digitization and interactive media allow a faster and more immersive distribution of socialisation and indoctrination contents than classical one-way media. First of all, and this has been known for a long time, digital media can spread contents around the globe in seconds ('global village' [30]). But more importantly, interactive (social) media have a much stronger effect on individuals than one-way media because they enable dialogues and conversations. Interaction can create buy-in and agreement much faster than unilateral communication. This is the main reason why social media are so powerful.

How can they be used to exert authoritative power? Algorithms can be used to suppress certain communication contents or to restrict their reach, and also to enhance the reach of certain contents. Users with high reach can be identified and targeted via shadow banning (reach reduction) or deletion from a social media platform. This allows censorship, but also propaganda and indoctrination. Nevertheless, the potential for automation of such interventions is rather low. This is due to the fact that while sequential stochastic models (so called LLM) can generate content of relatively good quality, they are unable to interpret language. They merely produce sequences of symbols with a high likelihood given the input sequence they received. The likelihood is determined by the model's configuration, which is derived from the data used to configure it [24, ch. 10]. Because of the relatively high quality of their output, users believe that the models understand their input utterances. But that is not the case. A constant adaptation and management of the algorithms is necessary, and their failure rates are so high that it is impossible to rely on them to manipulate digital media contents. Nevertheless, they can support the work of those in charge of the supervision, moderation and manipulation of online contents.

2.2.2 Attitude bias

Another aspect of algorithmic support of authoritative power is so-called 'attitude bias' [5, 3]. This phrase describes that language models derived from large corpora tend to produce sequences of symbols which read like the attitudes and prejudices of the humans who created the texts used to configure the models. When models are configured using unfiltered corpora from internet texts, they contain a multitude of language patterns which are seen as problematic 'hate speech'. Creators of such models have therefore worked on preselecting texts for training or biasing the models in the (semi-)supervised training phase to adjust their bias towards language (or, in the case of image-generating algorithms, picture) patterns they deem favourable. Often, these contents are in line with

indoctrination or propaganda narratives. For example, a foundational model created by Google discriminates against whites (it created pictures of black and female popes, refused to portray white US presidents and even depicted Waffen-SS members as black) and the majority of US journalists, and has a massive political bias towards the left wing of the US democratic party [29]. This shows the limitations of algorithmic enhancement of authoritative power: Introducing bias into algorithms at a level that is suitable to automatically create acceptable indoctrination and propaganda material is not possible because the tuning of the model parameters via (semi-)supervised training is semantically and pragmatically so coarse grained that humans immediately realise the low quality of what they are confronted with.

It can be safely concluded that while digitization increases the speed and intensity of the distribution of indoctrination contents, algorithms do not have a major effect on the modulation of authoritative power. Its main foundation remains socialisation via in-person interaction in families, schools, universities and cultural institutions.

2.3 Data-setting power

Data setting power is the power to manipulate the subjects' perception, behavior and thinking in the long term using infrastructure [2, 36]. As such infrastructure persists over time, rulers inheriting it from former generations sometimes repurpose its usage for their intentions, but its effect is usually long and uniform. Classical examples are the Chinese wall erected to defend the country against invaders from the North, or the French motorway and railway network which is strongly centralised towards Paris and has only a very few other hubs, so that the connectivity within the periphery is less good than, for example, in Germany. The latter became a nation much later than France, and therefore has a much more federal, less centralised infrastructure. This still influences the way the citizens think about space, distances, and relatedness. An interesting example of data-setting power is the Southern State Parkway in New York which was designed by Robert Moses to prevent buses and their destitute underclass users from travelling to Long Island [6]. Moses entire infrastructure planning for New York state is an important modern example of data-setting power.

Due to the massive usage of digital devices and online-technology by private citizens and businesses, the internet now acts as a crucial infrastructure. By guiding individuals and groups through information and entertainment sources, their perception can be influenced to a certain extent as the types of contents that they experience can be filtered using algorithms. This filtering and recommendation selection is conditioned on the user behaviour in the internet, which is recorded and used as independent variable for stochastic prediction. In a way, the internet platform providers have set up panoptica in which they can observe the user behaviour and influence (though not determine) the users' perception. A striking example is the way knowledge is presented in the internet. Wikipedia, a leading online knowledge resource, is heavily biased in fields that are politicised, such as climate theory, virology, or many humanities like anthropology or social sciences. A comparison of its articles to printed knowledge resources published before these fields were politicised (such as the Encyclopedia Britannica) quickly confirms this.

There are many projects to make Wikipedia even more biased by attempting to remove the reality of our history, the facts of which are now seen as being biased and requiring correction [13]. A generation which reads little and mostly online has little reference points outside such narratives. Besides this author-created bias, given the essential limitations of the algorithms in language interpretation explained above, automated filters and recommenders (for adds and search hits) create many false negatives and positives and thus yield unexpected or undesirable results [27].

Nevertheless, filtering and manipulation of content is not only performed for online content, but for all applications and web sites that link the internet to real-world entities and situations such as travel itineraries, the choice of accommodations and restaurants, physical shops or service providers. This gives internet recommendations huge power and can be used to ban or harm businesses who do not comply with certain regulations or agendas. As internet users can be identified upon the usage of mobile phones, such filtering can also be applied to persons. Examples are known from China, where protesters were denied access to public transportation to prevent them from assembling to protest against COVID lockdowns and other measures in 2020 to 2022.

Another example of new types of data-setting power are also plans to create central bank digital currencies (CBDC) with unique identifiers tagged to each unit that could be used to track and limit the spending behaviour of individuals and groups [37]. These examples show that digitisation enables a new layer of data-setting power via the internet, and algorithms can support the exertion of this power. Unlike bridges, roads, and waterways, which are omnipresent but static, the digital infrastructure is highly flexible and can rapidly be adapted to the needs of the rulers; even the hardware can be reconfigured according to political decisions, for example, to block certain data sources. This new source of state power became evident during the COVID era in which the social media were censored and manipulated by the secret service [47]. If we compare the data-setting power of traditional infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and waterways, to the internet infrastructure, we may indeed be led to believe that this new power is almost unlimited in its impact on the masses of its users.

However, humans still interact freely with each other in order to provide advice about which businesses, infrastructure or information sources to use. As with all types of data-setting power, collective intentionality can suddenly deviate from the pattern intended by the rulers. Therefore, though AI can intensify data setting power, expectations that humans might turn into blind slaves of the algorithms and ‘lose their individuality’ [22] are as wrong as the idea that the medieval church completely controlled the behavior of European populations. But we have to live with the global, omnipresent availability of a highly flexible infrastructure that is used as data-setting power to influence users.

3 Digital power and the new nobility

How is the enhancement of power we have just reviewed connected to the new nobility we described above?

Basically, the political will formation has led to an agenda of global governance, which

aims at controlling economic and political power at a transnational level via the global institutions listed above. Digitisation is used to implement this power more efficiently. *Instrumental power*, for example, was used by the Canadian government in 2021 to squash the protest of the lorry drivers by disabling their access to their bank accounts. It is used much more intensely in China, which has set up a social credit system for citizens and corporations. A similar system is deployed in the West for corporations, it forces them to comply with the so-called ESG rules to get access to loans and to be able to issue bonds. These rules are derived from the economic and political agenda of the globalists.

The contents of *authoritative power messages* are also strongly influenced by the political will of the new nobility. For example, it is now accepted by a significant proportion of Western populations that human carbon dioxide production is causing the evolution of the climate we have seen over the last 150 years, and that contributing to this production is immoral, though this view is scientifically highly questionable [48, 49, 28]. *Data-setting power* over the internet is also used to promote the various components of the globalist agenda. CBDC and a digital travel system based on a surveillance and access-control infrastructure in combination with digital tokens carried by the individuals which can hold medical status data are important examples.

Technical progress has always enabled the intensification of power, and also allowed rulers to create greater hegemonic spheres. Digitization and algorithms fit into this scheme, though due to the limitations of mathematical modeling, humans are still needed to execute the intentions of those who hold power. What limits power? Competition among the powerful and resistance of the ruled if their needs are systematically ignored. We will see more of both as the exertion of globalist power intensifies.

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