

# Networked News Publics, Disrupted: How Platform Actions Can Affect Collective Gatewatching and Newssharing Practices

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## Abstract

Social media platforms have long been recognised as key spaces for the dissemination of news – by news organisations themselves, but also by ordinary users, who may share news content from official accounts or initiate the sharing process themselves. Such collective and distributed sharing practices can be understood as gatewatching: rather than reporting the news themselves, users discover new news reports from the mainstream and fringe sources they follow, and amplify them for their own audiences. In principle, this can aid the rapid dissemination of breaking news just as much as the (intentional or unintentional) amplification of mis- and disinformation; in practice, the eventual patterns of dissemination for any such content result from the interpersonal as well as intra- and intergroup dynamics amongst sharers. They depend, for instance, on whether user collectives sanction or reward the sharing of biased or untruthful content that aligns with their attitudes or ideologies.

This chapter explores the networked logics of such collective but largely uncoordinated gatewatching and newssharing from a conceptual point of view, but also draws on an unwanted but powerful natural experiment to examine how such practices can be disrupted by changes implemented by platform operators. For this component, it explores the Facebook News Bans implemented temporarily in Australia (18-26 February 2021) and – potentially – permanently in Canada (in place since August 2023), and investigates how these affected or affect the circulation of news and news-like content on Facebook in both countries.

## Introduction: Gatewatching the News

The first decades of the twenty-first century saw a substantial disruption in the way people encounter, engage with, and share news. With the emergence of news blogs, initially, and even more so with the growing popularity of Facebook and, especially, Twitter as mainstream social media platforms, the audiences for news content became increasingly active news users: rather than merely accessing news Websites to check on the latest updates, or (slightly more actively) searching for such updates on generic or specific search engines like Google Search or Google News, they could now encounter news headlines and links in their social media feeds (and indeed post such content themselves), re-share and thereby amplify these reports to their own networks, and offer their own commentary, contextualisation, and feedback on such news stories themselves.

This challenged the existing gatekeeping regime and explanatory authority of mainstream news publishers and their journalists, and thereby increased the diversity of the news being posted, shared, and encountered: while those news outlets and journalists were of course themselves also often actively using social media platforms to promote their stories, social media users could now follow many such sources, re-share reporting from a wide variety of outlets, and acknowledge insightful as well as criticise inaccurate reporting. Unless caught up in newsworthy events themselves, by accident or by design, such news users did not become gatekeepers in their own right, but they did assume a new role as *gatewatchers*, observing the output gates of mainstream and

fringe news publications and disseminating (and thereby amplifying) those news items which they deemed worthy of greater attention (Bruns, 2005; 2018). At the level of the individual user, such gatewatching may have remained haphazard and unplanned, although some especially dedicated social media news curators also emerged and gained a distinct audience of followers (Hermida et al., 2014; Thorson & Wells, 2016); at a collective level, however, this gatewatching soon turned into a habitual aspect of social media use – the majority of users share news content with their friends and followers at least some of the time (Newman et al., 2016: 101).

Collectively, then, such habitual gatewatching and newssharing has come to exert considerable power: social media news audiences are able to crowdsource news reports – and news reporters – to significantly greater visibility, as Meraz & Papacharissi (2013) have observed. This is also why, for better or for worse, modern newsrooms have spent considerable time and effort on maximising their social media visibility, closely (even obsessively) monitoring their engagement metrics and experimenting with ever more sophisticated strategies for attracting audiences – from A/B testing headlines and image choices to employing social media editors and advisers to maximise the impact of their stories (Cherubini & Nielsen, 2016). But even such advanced approaches cannot return social media users' attention to a single preferred news outlet: mainstream, all-purpose social media platforms enable their users to make a wide a diverse range of connections, and this promotes context collapse (Marwick & boyd, 2011), as users with all kinds of specialty interests share and amplify news on 'their' topics within the same space – and their gatewatching practices therefore result in the sharing of news from many sources. This explains why, as analysis from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism has shown, those who get their news from social media encounter a significantly wider range of sources than those who do not, and this effect is especially strong for younger users and users with limited interest in the news (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2018).

The consequences of these developments are well-documented. Prior to its recent 'enxittification' (cf. Doctorow, 2022) under the regime of Elon Musk, Twitter was the go-to platform especially for breaking news: as Alfred Hermida put it (2014), it served as an ambient news network that was always on in the background, but pushed into the foreground with every major event; it was here that many people first encountered political scandals, natural disasters, celebrity deaths, sports results, and much more, at every level from the hyperlocal to the global. The growth in smartphone use and capabilities further extended such live coverage of breaking news from short-message text updates to image, video, and even live video news reporting, on Twitter and other social media platforms. Even professional news reporters often posted their updates on Twitter and other social media platforms before filing their full stories for publication, and the rise of the liveblog as a novel journalistic format owes a great deal to professional news outlets' attempts to combine the publishing speed of social media with the editorial oversight of mainstream journalism (Tereszkiewicz, 2014; Thurman & Schapals, 2016; Thurman & Walters, 2013), on a publishing platform that – unlike social media sites – remains under the sole control of the news organisation.

In spite of such industry attempts to maintain their journalistic boundaries, this also shifted the power balance between news outlets, and between outlets and their journalists: those news organisations that managed to adapt well to a social media-driven news environment (including not least those new entrants that were born digital, free from the routines of legacy media production) often flourished, while those outlets whose coverage and analysis seemed mediocre (especially also in contrast to market leaders from *The New York Times* to *The Guardian*, whose content could now circulate world-wide) struggled to cut through. Similarly, the personalisation of newssharing and news engagement on social media platforms meant that individual journalists could rise to personal prominence in a way that previously only the nightly news anchors of the pre-social media age had been able to; these prominent journalists could now trade on their follower numbers and the personal brands they represented (Hanusch & Bruns, 2017), and even turn from salaried employees to independent freelancers. This personalisation of news reporting also comes with substantial downsides, however, including excessive professional and personal scrutiny especially for women and minority journalists (Hedman, 2016; Hedman & Djerf-Pierre, 2013).

## The Dark Sides of Gatewatching and Newssharing

Indeed, the increased attention to – and even obsession with – social media metrics in the news industry also led to the rise of new news outlets and newswork roles whose sole focus it was, and is, to attract audiences to content. Such clickbait producers exploited the ease with which, individually, users could become gatewatchers (by simply clicking the tweet or retweet buttons, or their equivalents on other platforms), and the speed at which, collectively, these individual gatewatching and newssharing actions could turn into a viral content sharing trend; they further maximised the virality of their low-grade content by shaping their headlines and story presentation to appear particularly intriguing. Some such outlets – like *Buzzfeed News* – invested some of their proceeds in the production of quality news content alongside the clickbait, but this proved successful only for a limited time (Salmon, 2014).

Some outlets engaged in these practices not only for merely commercial reasons, but also out of political motivations. Since the mid-2010s, growing domestic polarisation in many nations, coupled with the re-emergence of explicitly populist and illiberal parties and leaders (Bennett & Kneuer, 2023; Štětka & Mihelj, 2024) and, at times, actively encouraged by foreign interference from regimes in Russia, China, and elsewhere, has provided a fertile ground for the emergence of a wide variety of fringe journalistic and pseudo-journalistic outlets and influencers whose news or news-like content is gatewatched and shared by ideologically aligned social media users (Angus et al., 2023; Chadwick et al., 2018; Phillips & Milner, 2020); the political and economic shocks of Brexit, the Trump presidency, and the COVID-19 pandemic as well as a litany of further domestic and international crises over the past ten years have further contributed to an increase in audiences who seek simple explanations and comforting reassurance in times of deep personal and societal crisis, and are susceptible to the rhetoric of charlatans and demagogues (Hart et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2015).

Here we encounter the dark side of the collective news curation processes that crowdsource key voices to prominence which Meraz & Papacharissi had identified (2013): while, in their case study of the Arab Spring protests of the early 2010s, the collectives of social media users involved in these processes broadly shared prosocial and prodemocratic attitudes, and thereby resisted attempts by regime media to denigrate the protests by spreading disinformation, today some collectives of hyperpartisan users are united in their illiberal and antidemocratic attitudes and actively seek to exploit social media logics (van Dijck & Poell, 2013) to disseminate the news reports (and/or disinformation) that support their ideological perspectives. The fringe media ecosystem of outlets and influencers that has emerged – in most western contexts predominantly on the far right of the political spectrum (Benkler et al., 2018; Faris et al., 2017; Kristensen et al., 2023; Mayerhöffer et al., 2024; Schrimpf et al., 2023; Zehring & Domahidi, 2023) – actively supports such efforts by providing them with ready-made content, and thereby enrolls ordinary social media users who are vulnerable to such hyperpartisan rhetoric in a process of what Kate Starbird has described as “participatory disinformation” (Starbird et al., 2019; 2023).

It is important to note in this context that the political activists and ordinary users involved in such processes neither are, nor seek to be, enclosed in the ideological ‘echo chambers’ that some commentators and scholars seek to discern everywhere on social media platforms (Sunstein, 2017). Indeed, echo chambers, defined as hermetically sealed information environments whose inhabitants are disconnected from the wider informational environment and no longer encounter any counterattitudinal content, would be inherently detrimental to the participatory disinformation effort (Bruns, 2019). The very purpose of that effort is to make its propagandistic contents disseminate virally as widely as possible; if the producers or audiences for such content were enclosed in their own information cocoons away from the mainstream of social media (in separate networks on the same mainstream platforms, or even in dedicated fringe platforms of their own), this would create substantial barriers to the widespread sharing and dissemination of such fringe content throughout mainstream society. Instead, as Dehghan and Nagappa have shown (2022), fringe platforms like Gab serve as a staging ground from which committed hyperpartisan actors plan and execute their attempts to influence and disrupt broader public debates. In other words, rather than settling into an ideologically homogenous ‘echo chamber’ of their own they are actively breaking down any platform barriers to the flow of information that may exist between their fringe communities and the mainstream.

Instead of simply blaming social media platforms and their logics, and the ‘echo chambers’ that such logics are supposed to create, for the apparent rise in propaganda and disinformation, hyperpartisanship and polarisation, populism and illiberalism, around the world, we must therefore seek explanations predominantly in human rather than technological factors. This does not absolve social media platforms – and their platform operators – of all blame, of course: the very distinct and specific social and communicative affordances that such platforms offer inherently and inescapably shape how they can be used, even if social media users also always push back against, reappropriate, and co-create these affordances in ways that were unforeseen by their designers (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Burgess & Baym, 2022). Similarly, the various ‘community standards’ that platform operators choose to articulate and enforce, more or (often) less consistently, also affect how and by whom such platforms are predominantly used. Even though it was never a particularly well-run platform, the severe deterioration of platform standards from Twitter to X amply demonstrates the substantial impact that a change in organisational direction can have even while the technological foundations of a given platform remain broadly unchanged.

## The Publics of Newssharing

Interacting with the opportunities and constraints that the diverse platform affordances presented by the various social media platforms offer, gatewatching and newssharing address and even construct several different kinds of publics at the same time (cf. Bruns, 2023a). In the first place, as a habitual practice carried out by individual users, their intent is likely to be simply to address each user’s personal public (Schmidt, 2014): the collection of followers and friends that the user has accumulated. In sharing the news content they find relevant – whether this is a random collection of ‘interesting’ stories or a more carefully curated feed of articles relating to specific persistent topics of interest –, users thus speak to an imagined audience (Litt & Hargittai, 2016); in the process, they also maintain and build their own online persona, of course, which may well vary from platform to platform as they address different imagined audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011).

But as several, even many, such users engage in these habitual if uncoordinated gatewatching and newssharing practices, other types of publics can also emerge. This is especially obvious in the context of breaking news: as many users independently of each other begin to share the same breaking news stories, platform algorithms (especially on pre-Musk Twitter) might detect such collective patterns and highlight them publicly as ‘trending topics’; this, in turn, may lead other users to share and re-share more of these stories and the posts that contain them, and further amplify the trend. Resulting from this amplification spiral, then, are *ad hoc* publics (Bruns & Burgess, 2015) that are centred on the topics of these trends, and may evolve over time from an initial uncertainty about the nature and veracity of available news reporting through sustained engagement with the core news event to the evaluation, critique, and contextualisation of its developments. Such processes may unfold over a very brief period of time (with trending topics and their associated *ad hoc* publics forming and dissolving within hours), but – as major developments such as the Arab Spring have shown – may also remain active, with their own ups and downs and a series of subtopics emerging and declining, for many months. Platform architectures like Twitter’s also supported them through the coordinating mechanism of hashtags, which enabled collectives and communities of interested users to create textual markers that flagged their shared interests on the fly, and even to diversify into several subset communities with more specific areas of focus (e.g. by creating #Egypt, #Libya, and #Syria in addition to a general #ArabSpring hashtag); following the influx of spam bots in recent years these have become a great deal less effective on Twitter / X, however.

Where such *ad hoc* publics persist for longer and their interests evolve beyond engagement with short-term breaking news topics, or where gatewatching and newssharing address long-standing topical interests in the first place, they might also give rise to more stable interest publics (or communities of interest). Here, platforms with affordances that support the establishment of longer-term community structures (such as Facebook’s pages and groups functionality, Reddit’s subreddits, or Telegram’s channels) may be more prominent than Twitter with its relatively loose and ephemeral communicative affordances (though here, too, persistent communities with regular meet-ups have been observed; Burgess et al., 2015). Whether through their

encounters in *ad hoc* publics, or through pre-existing online or offline networks, the participants in such interest publics are likely to have connected around these shared interests, and – in addition to general discussion and chat – also actively engage in gatewatching, sharing, evaluating, and thereby curating news and related information, and therefore also compile a valuable resource for users with a newly developed interest in the topic.

Such interest publics, even where they deal with particularly bespoke, niche topics, should nonetheless not be misunderstood as ‘echo chambers’ or ‘filter bubbles’ (unless we use these terms as mere synonyms for ‘community of interest’, which would remove their strongly negative connotations altogether): first, collectively such interest publics by their very nature maintain a persistent interest in the wider world, gatewatching and sharing news from a diverse range of sources, and are therefore far from ignorant of counter-attitudinal ideas; and second, individually the participants in such publics are highly likely to have a broad range of other online and offline interests, through which they will encounter a wide spectrum of topics and perspectives. They would need to be cultishly devoted to a single interest public to the exclusion of all others to be able to achieve the ideological purity that the ‘echo chamber’ thesis assumes (O’Hara, 2014; O’Hara & Stevens, 2015).

Indeed, then, these topically focussed interest publics are instead highly likely to overlap and combine to form broader public spherules (Cunningham, 2001; Gitlin, 1998) devoted to their overarching themes. Interest publics on specific renewable energy technologies may serve as the building blocks of wider public spherules that debate ways to address the climate crisis; interest publics on particular styles of music may combine to form a broader public spherule of music fandom online. Such public spherules are therefore also no longer platform-specific, as they incorporate the various interest publics on related topics that may be found on specific platforms into a greater whole, and in doing so also reflect the fact that many of their participants are themselves likely to be active across multiple such platforms. Notably, of course, this picture is not limited to prosocial, prodemocratic activities: Henriksen et al. (2024), for instance, though not using the specific terminology employed in the present chapter, have documented how the diverse interest publics for alt-right ‘news’ content that exist in various northern European countries and across several major social media platforms intersect and combine into a broader, cross-platform and multi-national public spherule of illiberalism and disinformation.

## **Platforms’ Complicated Attitudes towards Gatewatching and Newssharing**

As habitual, everyday user practices, gatewatching and newssharing remain central to such topical interest publics and thematic public spherules; as participants share what they consider to be news and newsworthy with other members of their community, they maintain social connection and enable interpersonal engagement. *Prima facie*, this is beneficial to the platforms too: elevated levels of activity, especially where they originate organically from ordinary users rather than being artificially promoted by platform algorithms and inauthentic commercial or political actors, keep users engaged and ensure they regularly return to the platform and its communities. In practice, however, major platform providers like Facebook and Twitter have had a complex and changeable approach towards the gatewatching and newssharing practices that their users continue to engage in.

This is due in part to the power over general public and specific journalistic and political agendas that collective newssharing and news curation processes have been shown to have, which became obvious at first especially on highly public platforms like Twitter. Major trending topics on political and societal issues necessitated journalistic and political responses, especially when – like #ArabSpring, #MeToo, or #BlackLivesMatter – they were employed by or developed into longer-term social movements; this was at times inconvenient to political, societal, and commercial actors (including platform operators themselves), and also attracted exploitation by inauthentic, antisocial, and/or antidemocratic influence campaigners. At least prior to its ‘enxittification’, Twitter therefore continued to tinker with its trending topics algorithms to avoid the highlighting of commercial or political spam campaigns or other undesirable content, and sought (not always successfully) to police against the disruption of the *ad hoc* and interest publics organised around hashtags by

malicious spam, astroturfing, and sockpuppeting campaigns. As noted, many such efforts have declined notably, or ceased altogether, under the erratic leadership of Elon Musk.

Such challenges exist on other platforms, too, where they might be less visible (not least due to the comparatively less public nature of private or semi-private discussion spaces on platforms like Facebook or WhatsApp) but are no less insidious. Even in the absence of overt attempts to disrupt and misdirect public debate and opinion formation by conducting influence campaigns that give the appearance of gatewatching and newssharing but promote disinformation and discord, however, some operators have been working to actively discourage the sharing of news on their social media platforms altogether, or have at times championed particular forms of news over others. As the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, for instance, since 2016 Meta encouraged journalistic organisations to post their news in video formats, as Meese & Hurcombe report (2021); this may have reflected internal user activity data analysis showing that such content kept users engaged on the site for longer, an interest in competing with emerging video-first platforms like TikTok, or perhaps the realisation that such content, which has greater production costs, is more difficult for disinformation campaigns to produce than simple text-based news articles.

Many news organisations – even those with a traditional emphasis on text over audiovisual content – scrambled to address such algorithmic preferences for video content by hiring video editors and creating in-house video production teams, and were thus particularly wrong-footed when Meta abruptly reversed its emphasis on video news content some time later and instead decided to discourage newssharing by ordinary users and journalistic outlets altogether (Meese & Hurcombe, 2021); at the time of writing, its stated intent is to substantially downrank posts containing links to news outlets, so that they no longer appear frequently and prominently in users' content feeds (Dudley-Nicholson, 2024). Here, a key motivation is likely to be that – especially over the past decade, following the series of severe global political shocks including Brexit, the Trump election, the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine and Gaza wars, the worsening climate crisis, and the continuing rise of illiberal and antidemocratic actors around the world – so much of the news being shared on Meta's and other social media platforms is disheartening, disturbing, and divisive, and predominantly produces negative reactions and engagement ranging from sadness through fear to anger.

Exploratory research using Meta's own Facebook URL Shares dataset (Messing et al., 2020) bears this out: for Australia, for instance, in spite of its considerable limitations this dataset of URLs shared publicly or privately on Facebook shows clearly that during the COVID-19-dominated year 2021, links to a small number of widely shared Australian news domains produced a far greater volume of 'angry' reactions than the URLs from all other prominent domains put together. While public attitudes towards the news might have improved somewhat following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, this observation illustrates that, compared to earlier decades when the then still new experience of news discovery via social media might have been interesting, intriguing, informative, and even enjoyable, news on social media today might for the most part merely confirm and reinforce the palpable existential dread that many users may well feel already. From this perspective, it is hardly surprising that platform operators like Meta are more than willing to substantially reduce the visibility of news content on their sites.

Indeed, beyond such downranking, Meta's involvement in outright news bans in several jurisdictions must also be understood in this light. In Australia for just over a week in February 2021, and in Canada since August 2023, Meta banned the posting of, access to, and engagement with any links to content from a loosely defined list of news and 'news-like' domains, including mainstream, specialist, and fringe news sources as well as state health departments and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology. Ostensibly, this was in reaction to the poorly constructed News Media Bargaining Code in Australia, and Bill C-18 in Canada (which largely copied the Australian legislation), both of which sought to force Meta and other major platforms to share some of their online advertising revenues with financially troubled news publishers (Bruns, 2023b; Leaver et al., 2021); however, Meta's readiness to remove news altogether from its platforms in these countries likely also reflects the company's recognition that, for all of its importance in informing the online public, gatewatching and newssharing – at least at present – is a source of user discontent and disharmony, and can lead to more severe dysfunction including online aggression and hate speech.

## Networked News Publics, Disrupted

This should not be misunderstood as an endorsement of, or argument for, such bans of news content, and of the gatewatching and newssharing practices that introduce such news content to online publics, from Meta's and other platforms, however. Meta has consistently argued that news engagement is only a minute part of what its users do on its platforms, and this is likely to be true; Meta's own claims that posts including a link to outside content (including, but not limited to news links) make up only 3.3% of all the content a typical user will encounter in their content feed (Meta, 2024) cannot be independently verified, since the company does not provide sufficient data access to scholarly, critical, public-interest research, but there is ample evidence that most social media users, and indeed most people in general, have a limited interest in following the news, and at present even increasingly engage in news avoidance tactics. (Again, this is almost certainly a consequence of the barrage of bad news stories that the world has endured in recent years.)

At the same time, especially in the context of such widespread news avoidance, the role of Meta and other social media platforms as spaces where audiences *do* still encounter news content – unwillingly and unwittingly, accidentally and serendipitously, and as the result of both the publishing efforts of professional news organisations and the collective habitual practices of ordinary users engaged in gatewatching and newssharing – has grown all the more important. Because of the permeable and interconnected nature of public, semi-public, and private spaces on such platforms it is virtually impossible to avoid at least such unintended encounters with the news content shared by others, at least as long as the platforms themselves are not actively hiding or banning it, and as a result social media are now *the* leading news source for some 29% of the global online population surveyed for the *Digital News Report 2024* (Newman et al., 2024: 21), and *a* key source for a much larger proportion – including especially also those 39% of respondents who actively avoid the news sometimes or often.

This being the case, an outright news ban or severe algorithmic downranking of news content on Facebook and other leading social media platforms would inevitably cause extreme disruption. While it may well make these platforms a 'happier' space – by reducing or removing angry and other negative reactions to contemporary news stories, and dampening down controversial and uncivil debates sparked by news coverage – it would also make it a considerably less well-informed one, and this has implications for the overall citizenry and their ability to engage in societal and democratic processes well beyond Facebook and other social media. Indeed, this decline might be sped up even further if the downranking or banning of news content targets only a narrow list of 'proper', quality news sites, but leaves the broader fringe of hyperpartisan outlets masquerading as news unscathed. In this worst-case scenario, quality journalism would be prevented from circulating through social media news publics altogether, while hyperpartisan, populist, and propagandistic mis- and disinformation would remain easily accessible to social media users who, as passive news users or active news avoiders, are already likely to lack the media literacies to distinguish such poor-quality news-like content from reliable reporting.

This is no purely hypothetical scenario, of course. While the brief Facebook news ban in Australia in February 2021 was resolved quickly enough to have no lasting effects, the Canadian news ban has been in continuous effect since August 2023, and early analyses of its impact on Canadian news audiences are highly concerning. A recent study by the Public Media Alliance (Pion, 2024), for instance, shows that – in addition to the obvious, 43% decline in overall news engagement that the drop-out of such a major source of visitor traffic to news outlets was always going to produce – less news overall is being consumed by Canadians as they have failed to compensate for the absence of news on Facebook by seeking out other channels of access to the news, and that local and small news outlets, who relied especially strongly on distribution via Meta's platforms, have been affected disproportionately severely.

Perhaps the most concerning finding from this report, however, is that only 22% of Canadians are even aware that Meta has banned news from its platforms in the country. This should not be misunderstood as a sign of resilience, or of the limited importance of Facebook and other Meta platforms as a source of news – rather, the 78% of Canadians who were unaware of the ban are most likely either to fall into the category of news avoiders who have yet to notice that even the accidental and serendipitous stream of news content that they used to encounter in their social media activities has now disappeared, and/or to have substituted whatever problematic

hyperpartisan and propagandistic sources still circulate on Meta’s platforms for more quality journalistic content, without noticing the difference.

The unfortunate Canadian news public’s experience therefore serves as a major natural experiment of what happens when news – and more to the point, the gatewatching, newssharing, news curation, and news engagement practices that are required for news on social media – are banned from a major, still market-leading social media platform. The Canadian experience documents how important gatewatching and newssharing continue to be, for establishing *ad hoc* and interest publics involving those users who are most engaged with the news they share and discuss, but especially also for producing a constant feed of news and information that reaches those who have long since disconnected from mainstream news sources and believe that ‘news will find me’ if the story is important enough (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). If and when, in response to poorly constructed government policies like the Australian News Media Bargaining Code or its Canadian cousin Bill C-18, or simply through platform actions designed to reduce discord and foster civility amongst users, such gatewatching and newssharing practices are frustrated by downranking or banned altogether, it is the most vulnerable, most news-averse users and citizens who will suffer first, and worst.

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