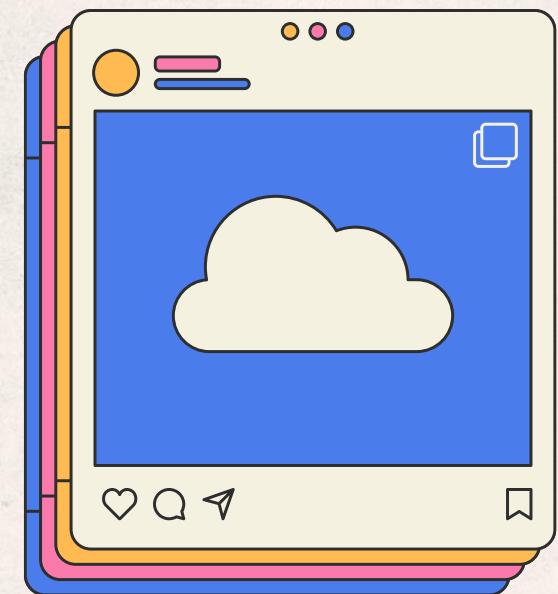
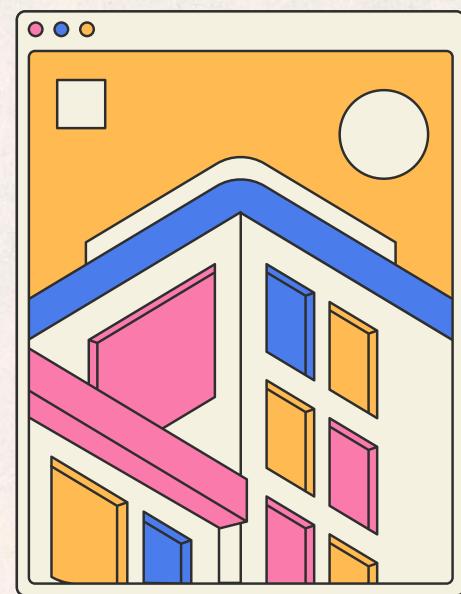
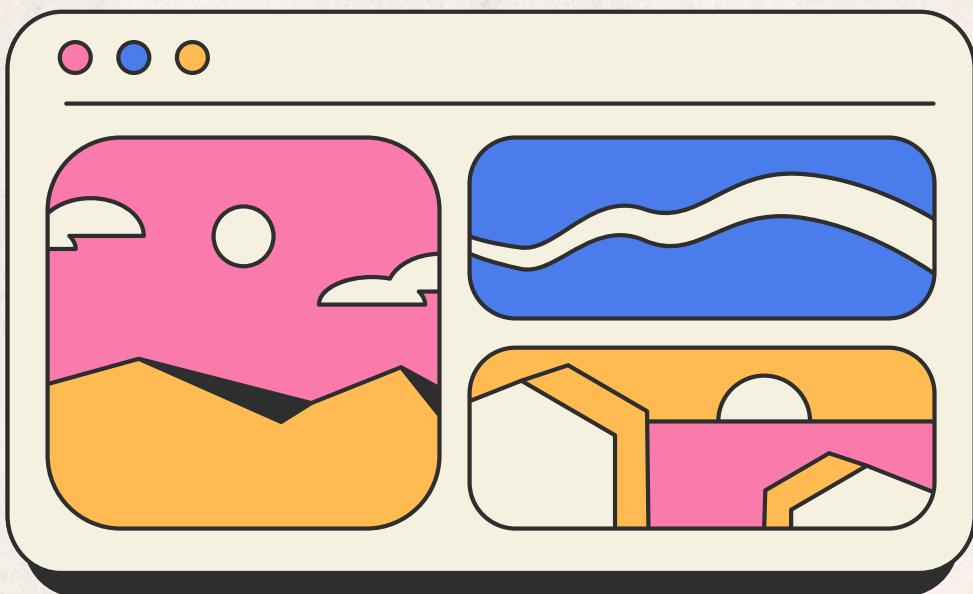
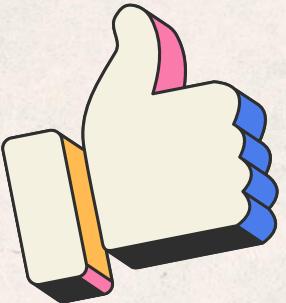


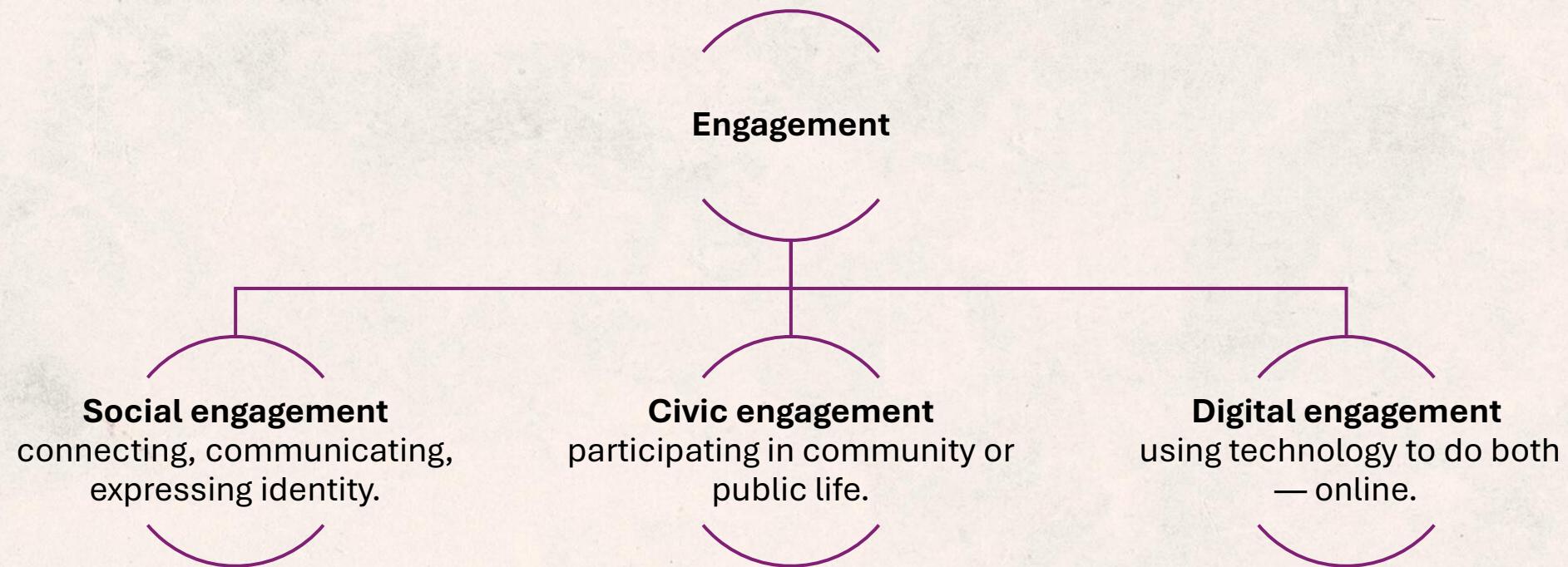
# Technological Influences on Engagement



Dr.sc.comm. Liva Kalnaca  
29.10.2025.

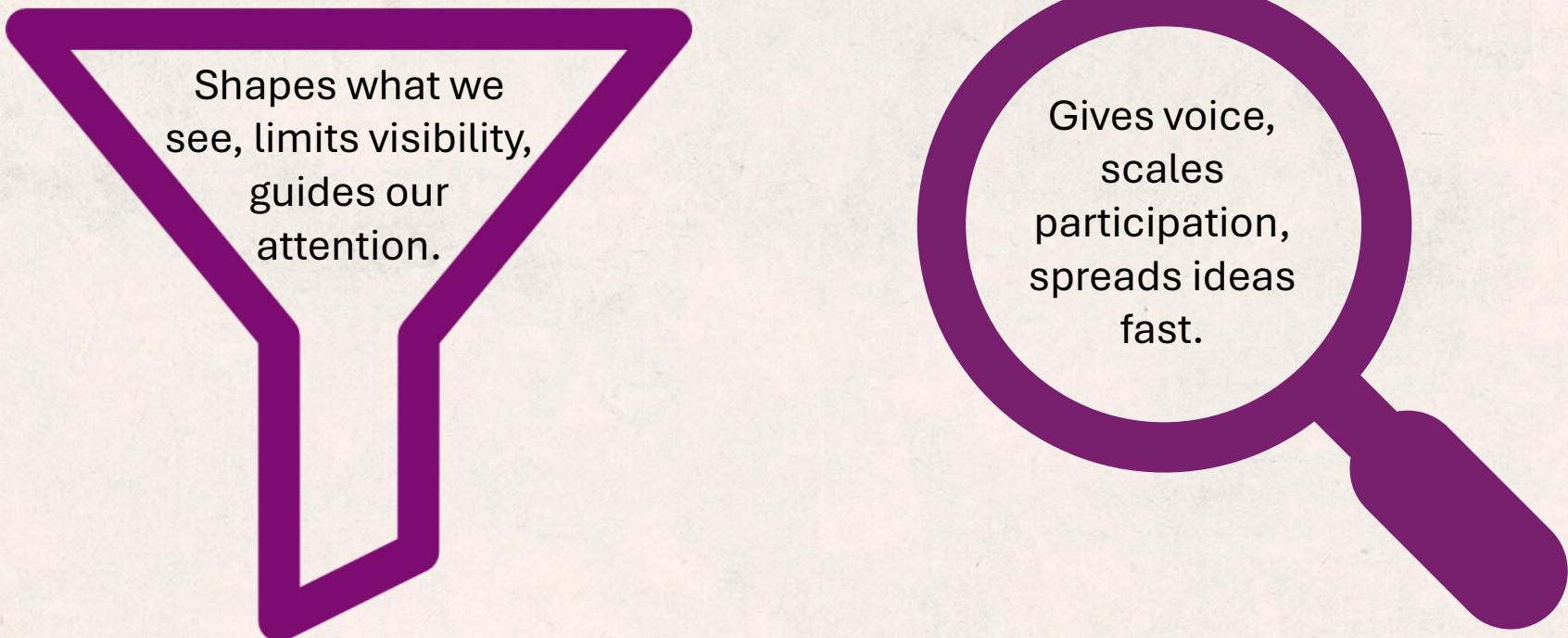
# What Do We Mean by “Engagement”?

**Engagement** = How people **pay attention, interact, and participate** in social, civic, or digital spaces.



# Technology as an Amplifier and a Filter

- Technology doesn't just connect us — it **amplifies** and **filters** our engagement.



**empower or distort engagement**

# Everyday Influences of Technology

**Recommendation  
algorithms**

**Notifications**

**Doomscrolling**

**Gamified apps**

**Civic campaigns  
via TikTok or  
Instagram**

# If you're not paying for the product, **you are the product.**

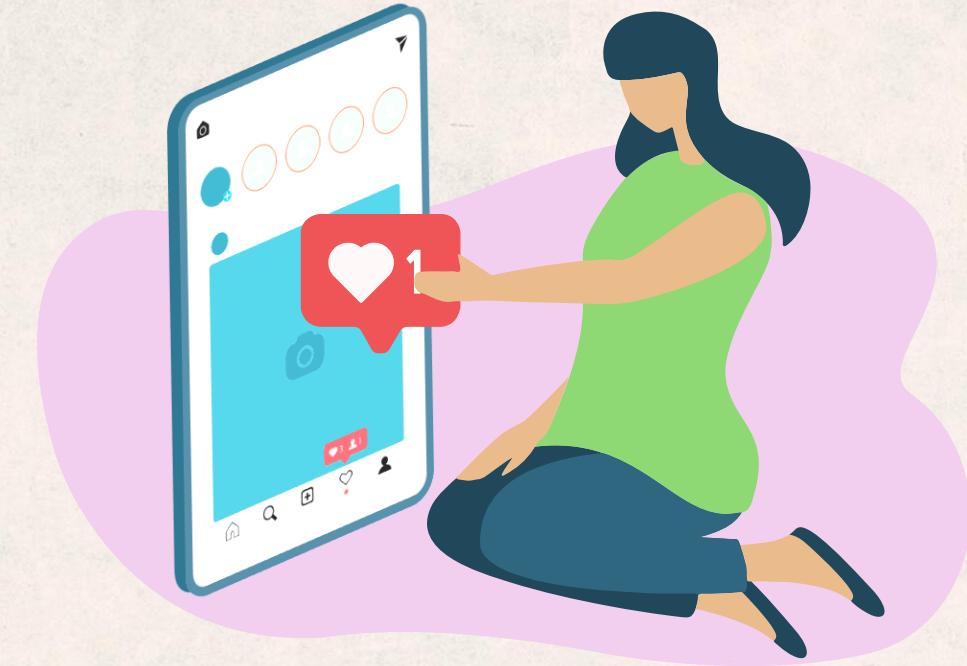
Platforms compete for one thing: **your attention.**

Your time = Their profit



# The Attention Economy

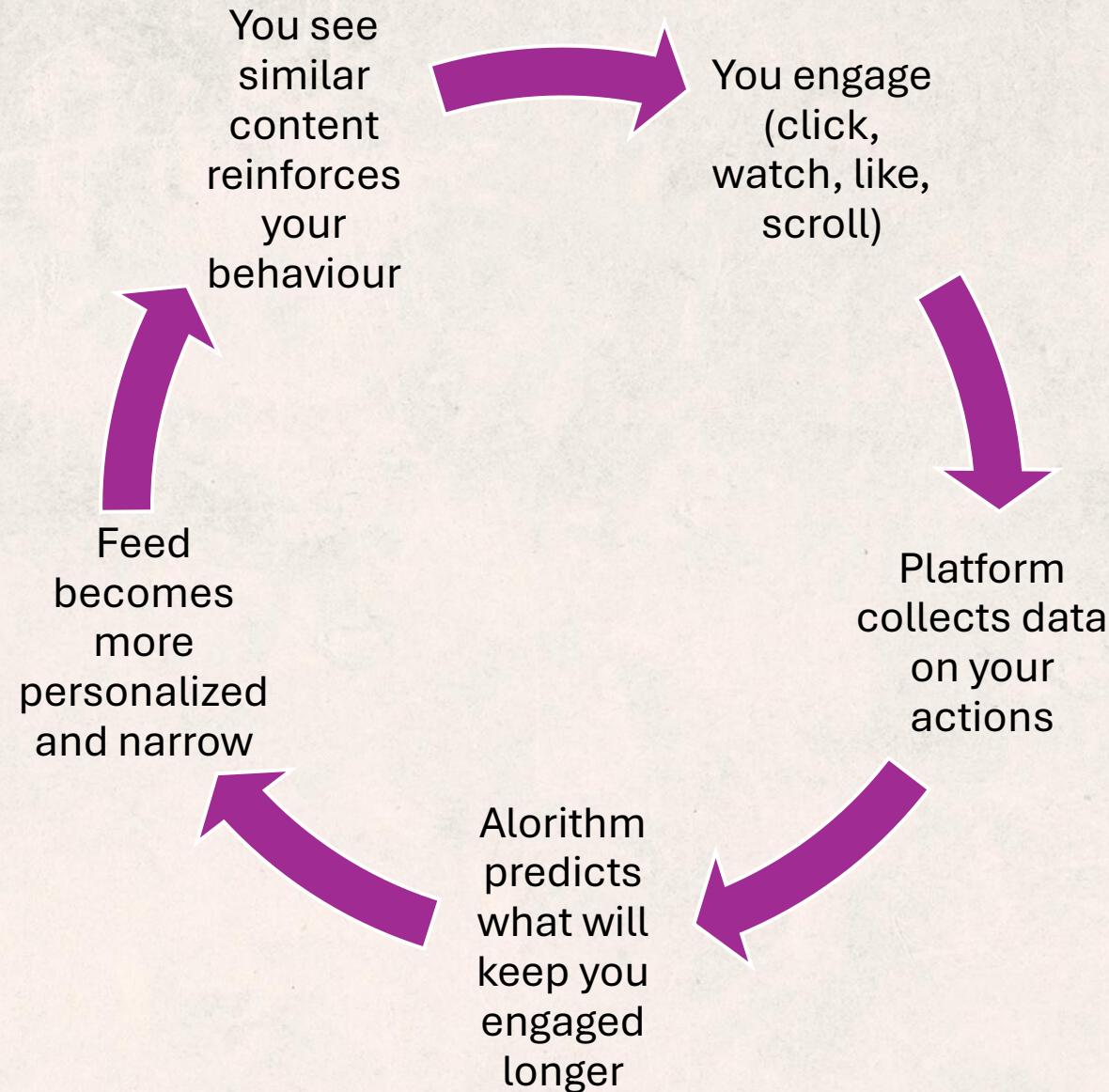
- Digital platforms are built to capture and hold attention — because attention drives ad revenue.
- Every scroll, like, or pause on a post becomes *data* that helps platforms predict what will keep you hooked.
- So the product isn't just content — it's *our attention and behaviour patterns*.

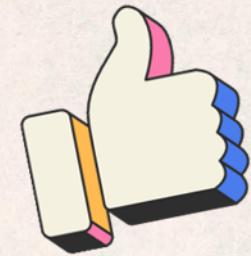


**Algorithms are built to  
maximize engagement,  
not to maximize truth, balance,  
or wellbeing.**

Most engaging = Most visible  
But not always most meaningful

# The Algorithmic Loop: the loop strengthens with every interaction

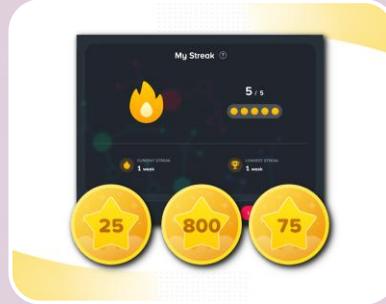
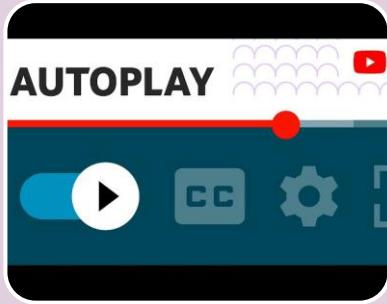
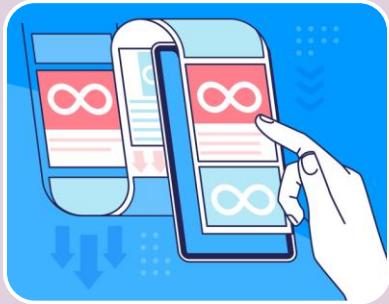




# What algorithmic loops have you been captured?



# The Mechanics of Capturing Attention



**Infinite scroll**

- Keeps brain in “search mode”

**Autoplay**

- Removes decision moment

**Push notifications**

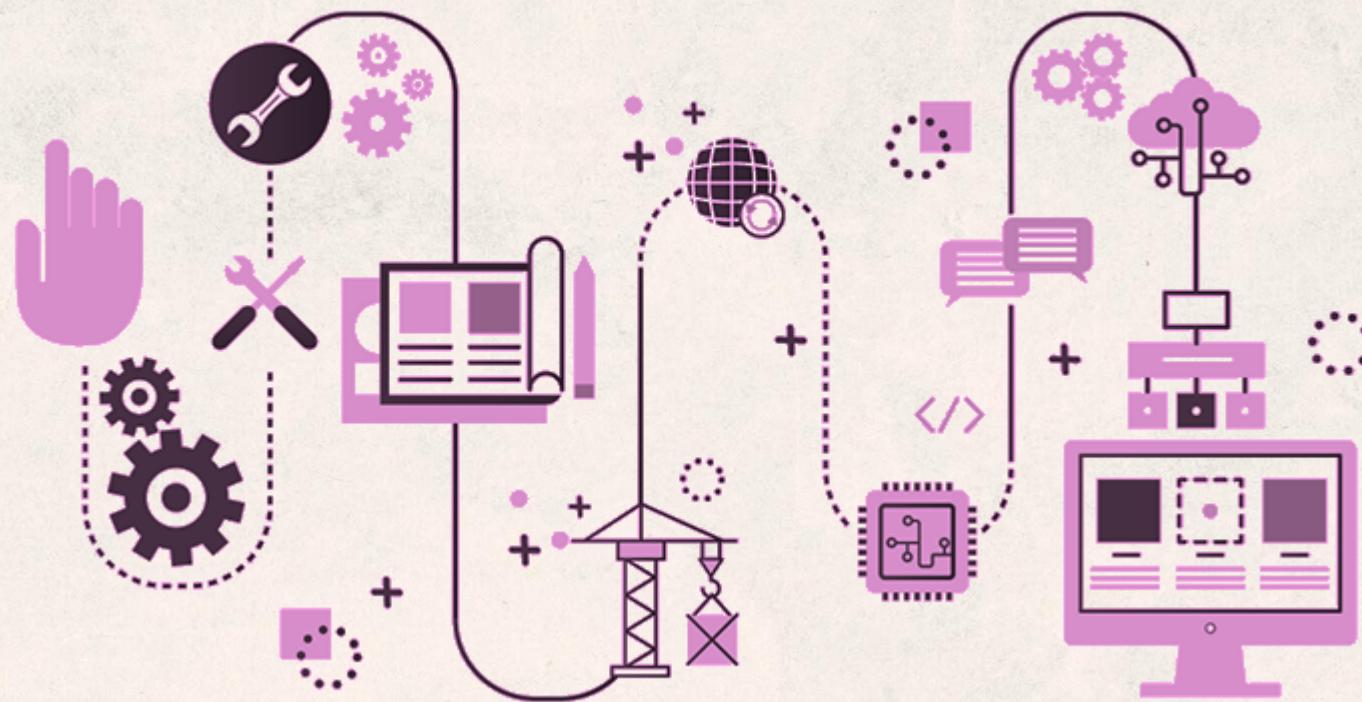
- Reinforces checking habit

**Streaks & badges**

- Uses dopamine-driven motivation

**Personalized feeds**  
Adapts to your micro-behaviours

Technology doesn't just show us content.  
It decides what's worth seeing.



# Are we training algorithm — or is it training us?

- Each platform's algorithm is tuned to maximize a different engagement metric.
- “What works” on one platform may not work on another because each algorithm trains users differently.





# Same search, different realities

1. What kind of content dominates (news, influencers, entertainment, etc.)?
2. Tone: positive / negative / emotional / informative
3. Who the main sources or voices are?
4. Any ads, hashtags, or suggested related topics?

- Did everyone see the same world?
- Who decides what's 'relevant' or 'important' for you?
- What might be the impact of this personalization on civic engagement or shared understanding?

If algorithms curate your reality, how can we stay aware of what we're *not* seeing?

# Technology itself is *neutral* — what matters is how it's *used and optimized*

## **EMPOWERING**

- builds knowledge
- connection
- participation
- ...

## **MANIPULATION**

- exploits emotion
- division
- dependence
- ...

# Empowerment happens when users become actors, not just consumer



# Manipulation often arises from optimization for engagement metrics, not intent to inform

**Echo chambers**  
Show users only like-minded views  
Polarization, loss of shared reality



**Outrage cycles**  
Reward emotionally charged content  
Anger spreads faster than facts



**Misinformation networks**  
Spread false or misleading narratives  
Undermines trust and democracy

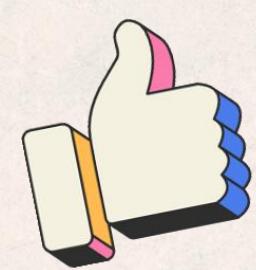


**Parasocial attachment**  
Creates one-sided emotional bonds with influencers  
Distorts self-perception and social comparison



**Gamified engagement loops**  
Use streaks, likes, or rewards to drive use  
Dependency, shorter attention spans

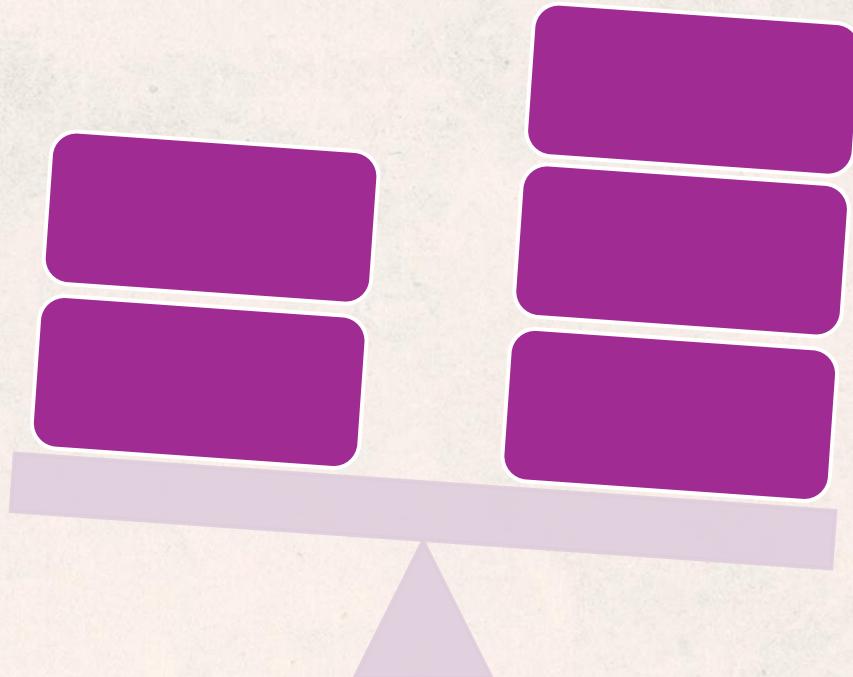




# Technology reflects human values — what we reward online shapes what grows

Empowering

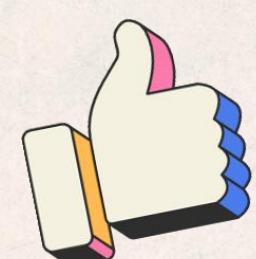
Manipulative



# What Is “Meaningful Engagement”?

## *Clicks → Connection*

- Builds understanding and participation
- Respects attention and mental wellbeing
- Encourages contribution, not just consumption
- Strengthens trust, empathy, and learning

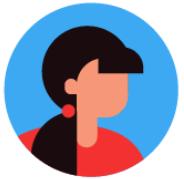


# Design for empathy, curiosity, or care — not only metrics

- How could Instagram promote real dialogue instead of likes?
- What if YouTube rewarded insightful comments instead of watch time?
- How could a school or organization encourage digital wellbeing?
- What would a ‘slow news’ app look like?
  
- Your suggestions?

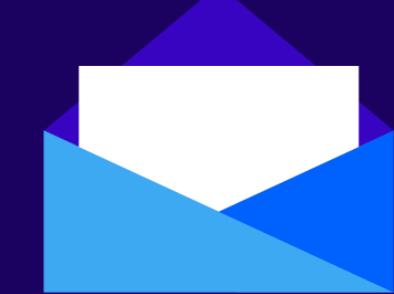
What would the internet look like if we designed it around meaning instead of attention?





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Thank You! ❤



Any questions?