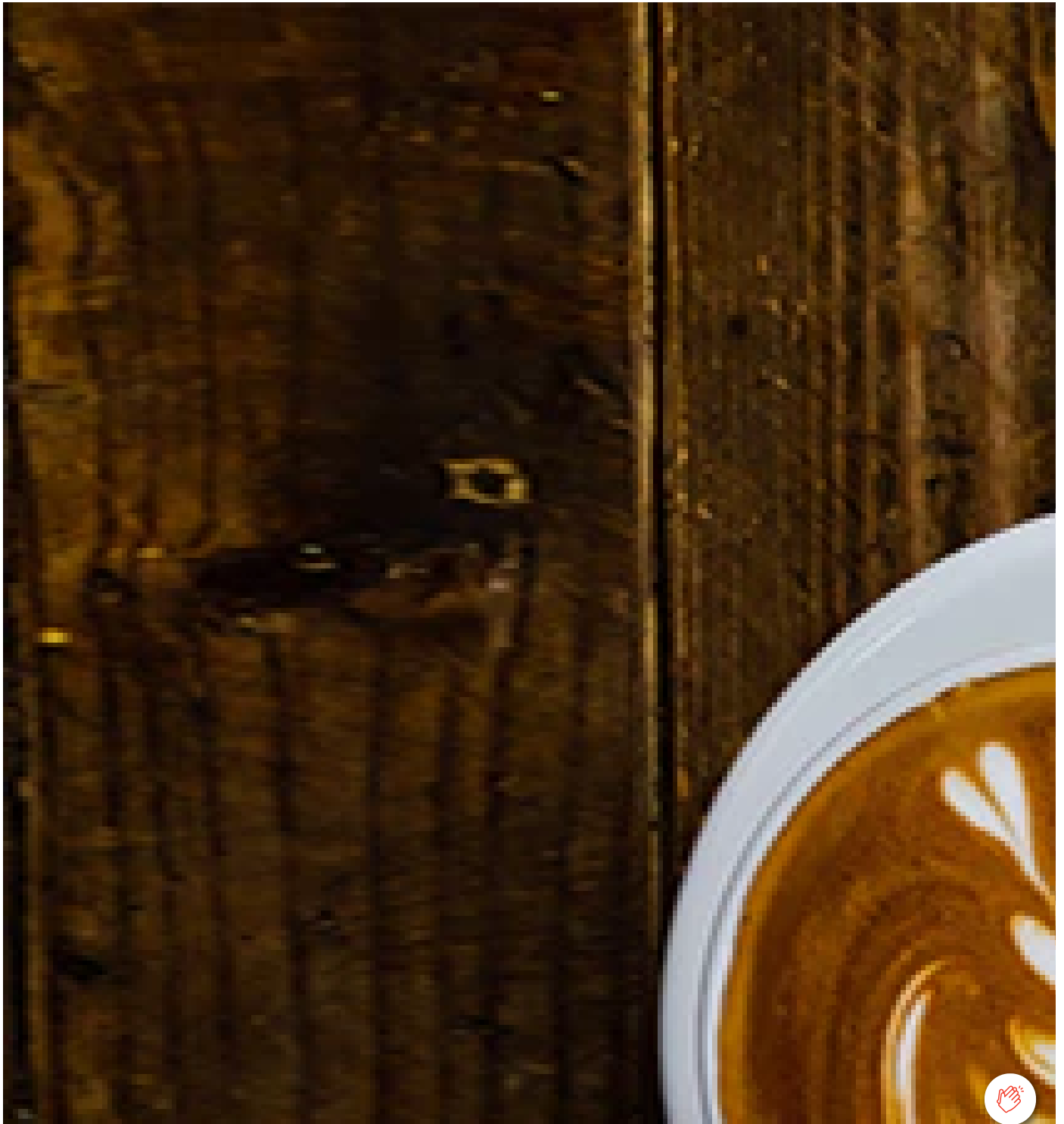BOOKS

Rise of the platform society: why public values matter even more in a techno-commercial world

This new book identifies a set of values and principles for not just tech giants, but entrepreneurs, governments, and civil society as well.

The growing number of reports of security breaches, anti-trust fines, fake news, violation of user privacy, and challenges to labou

It is not just company versus country, but a clash of ideologies and value systems that are at play here, according to **The Platfor**

> **Such values include privacy, accuracy, safety, security, fairness, citizen control, transparency, accessib**

The authors trace how these issues play out in four key sectors: news, urban transport, health, and education. The book spans 22

Jose van Dijck is a professor at Utrecht University, and author of *The Culture of Connectivity. A Critical History of Social Media.* **T**

Here are my key takeaways from this wide-ranging book. See also my reviews of the related publications *A Human's Guide to Ma*

The book focusses on large platform players like **"The Big Five"** (Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft), as well as sector-s

The global rise of platforms

The sharing economy and gig economy are other terms describing the platform movement. While platforms open up new busine

> **"Platforms are neither neutral nor value-free constructs; they come with specific norms and va** in

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...ictural platform players have invested in oth...

The Big Five **"constellations"** have become globally dominant and have considerable inter-sector influence; they almost functio...

For example, **Facebook** and **Google** together control over 60 percent of online advertising, the authors explain; their login ident...

Facebook doesn't call itself a media organisation, and Uber doesn't call itself a taxi company. Airbnb claims it only provides serv...

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China also has its own large platform players, but in a different ecosystem of state capitalism, accordi...

Public-private boundaries are becoming blurred as many of these US-based platforms ride on services and infrastructure paid fo...

The US systems are based on **libertarian values with few obligations towards the state or public,** but this conflicts with Europea...

News

The dominant platforms challenge notions of trust, comprehensive news coverage, content diversity, and journalistic independe...

Platformisation has led to the unbundling of news from news media and rebundling in new ways by content aggregators, the au...

But the datafication of news production and distribution rearranges gatekeeper roles of context and c...

Hybrid models are emerging in traditional news media, and native hosting of content with the platform players poses its own se...

The quantity and quality of news they produce are increasingly affected by platform algorithms. Emoti...

Though social media platforms like Facebook argue that they are tech companies and not media companies, they play a central...

They should take more responsibility for the power they wield. Fact-checking rules and publication guidelines should be opened...

Urban transport

Urban transport should support service quality, inclusion of all neighbourhoods and commuters, and labour rights, but these pri...

Uber could also do more to share its data with urban planners for better decision-making, the authors suggest. **The agg...ed**

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not been able to scale. **Sao Paolo is proposi**

Health

While personalisation through wearables can offer health benefits to end users, there are also concerns raised about the access

The large platforms players are increasingly controlling hardware, software, appstores, and health tools, the authors observe, po

PatientsLikeMe creates online communities for member solidarity and personalised services, but also offers "research services" t

> **Automated, real-time collection of health data at scale can offer huge health benefits, but there should**

The authors identify a number of emerging developments addressing these gaps, such as the European Open Science Cloud, he

Education

Education is about creating skilled workers but also knowledgeable citizens; it is about giving every child access to affordable l

Technocratic solutions such as the use of data-driven instruments and personalised learning should not come at the cost of inve

Alternative models that have been developed include **edX,** with open source code and courseware, and the **Open Education Eur**

Responsibility and governance

The authors conclude by recommending shared responsibility and cooperation between tech firms, civil society, sectoral players

Platform players have phenomenal economic and civic power today. The US tech giants are pushing economic values and corpo

Proposed measures so far include requirements of transparency and accountability, registered data accountants, citizen collectiv

> **Other initiatives have been launched by Tim Berners-Lee's Open Society Foundation to promote fairne**

Governments are regulators as well as tech developers. "Estonia is often mentioned as an advanced example of a proactive gove

> **A set of responsibility principles and alliances for a balanced platform ecosystem can wield influence i**

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