A low-angle, upward-looking perspective of several modern skyscrapers with glass facades, reaching towards a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The buildings are arranged in a way that creates a sense of height and scale, with their lines converging towards the top of the frame.

# Europeanisation and Platformisation: three views from below

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# Summary

## Understandings of Europeanisation

- Political
- Cultural - Identity-based
- Ethnic/geographic

## Platformisation

- Data extraction, dependencies, algorithmic ordering

## Three provocations

- Europeanisation from below
- Data for social benefit
- Communities connecting across space

# Europeanisation as a top down political process

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- A working definition

“Europeanisation consists of processes of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies.” (Radaelli, 2004: 4)
- A political definition, i.e. understanding the political dimensions of Europeanisation as a process of national adaptation to policies stemming from the EU institutions
- Political Europeanisation occurs as part of the broader process of European integration



# Europeanisation from below

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- Della Porta (2007) uses this term to refer to the process whereby social movements challenge European institutions and laws through transnational political action
- Della Porta (2020) observes a retreat from this kind of action following the austerity protests – since then, movements tend to address the national rather than the European space
- However, recent research has shown the existence of other efforts that can be thought of as Europeanisation from below:
  - Vukelic and Pesic (2022): environmental activism to halt the building of hydroelectric plant in a Natura protected area in Serbia succeeded in changing Serbian law to align with EU law in this respect



# Cultural Europeanisation as a bridging process

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- A concomitant (or for some, a prerequisite) of political Europeanisation is 'cultural (incl political culture) Europeanisation'
  - A shared cultural inheritance and a set of values that is legally enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights (see Delanty, 2005).
- European identity is the emerging form taken by this form of Europeanisation, referring not only to a shared culture but also to a form of 'constitutional patriotism' (Habermas, 1996), i.e. adherence to a shared set of values and political norms
- This form bridges the top down and bottom up perspectives but remains profoundly ambiguous
  - Mainly because of the gap between European values as rhetoric and reality but also because of the colonial undertones inherent in such rhetoric
  - The reclaiming of 'European values' to represent an essentially white Christian European identity
  - A shift from a political understanding of Europeanisation to an ethnocultural one used to exclude others





# Platforms





# Platforms: definition

- **A general definition:** “platforms as (re)-programmable digital infrastructures that facilitate and shape personalised interactions among end-users and complementors, organised through the systematic collection, algorithmic processing, monetisation, and circulation of data. (Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck, 2019: 3)



# Platforms are...

- Fueled by data,
- Organized by algorithms and interfaces,
- Formalized through ownership relations driven by business models,
- Governed through affordances and user agreements (van Dijck, 2018)





# Platformisation

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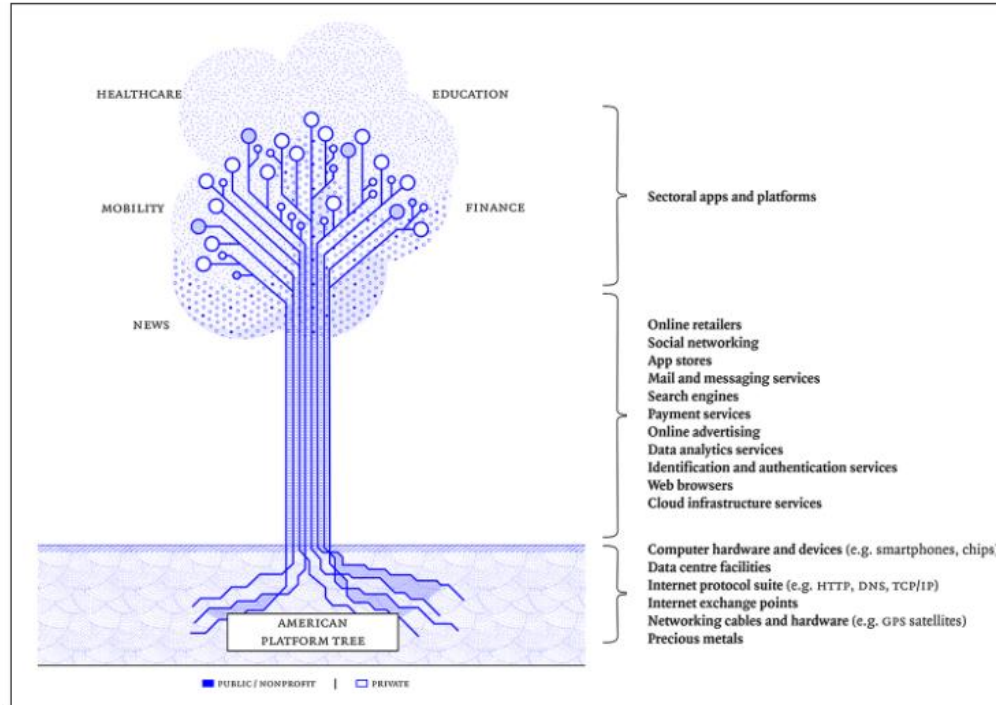
“the penetration of the infrastructures, economic processes, and governmental frameworks of platforms in different economic sectors and spheres of life.”  
(Poell, Nieborg and van Dijck, 2019: 6)

Three dimensions: dataification; multi-sided economic relations; governance of user interactions (via algorithms, interfaces etc)

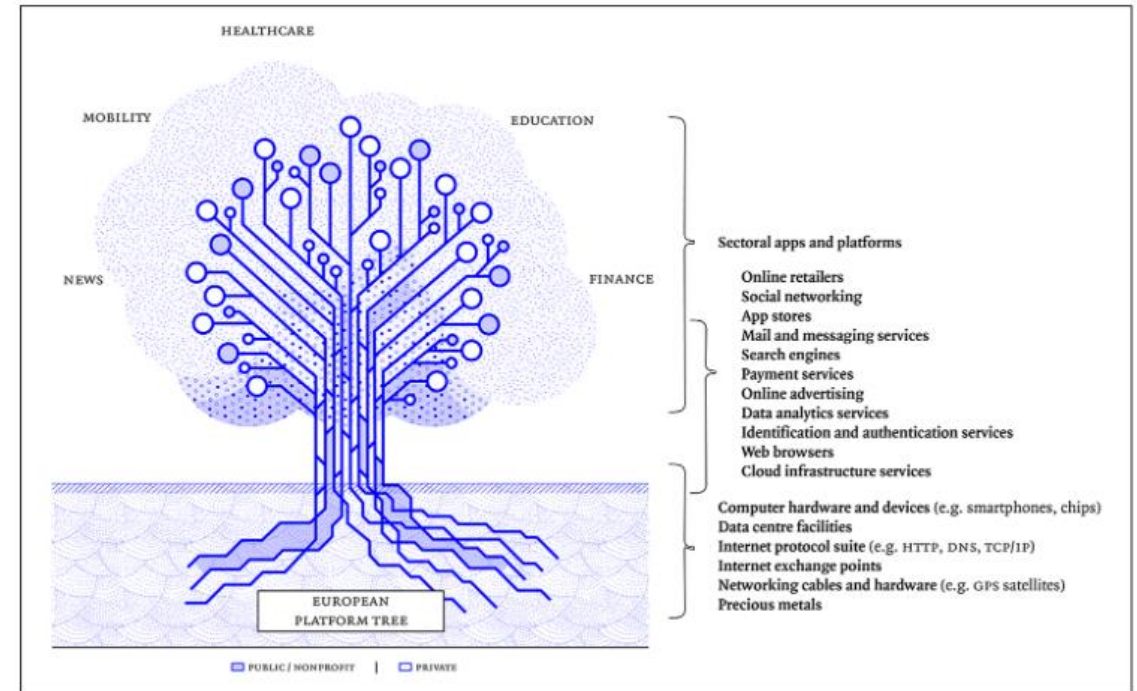




# Two views (van Dijck, 2021)



**Figure 1.** American Platform Tree (*Giant Sequoia*).  
Designed by Fernando van der Vlist.



**Figure 2.** European platform tree.

The platformisation of Europe and the Europeanisation of platforms



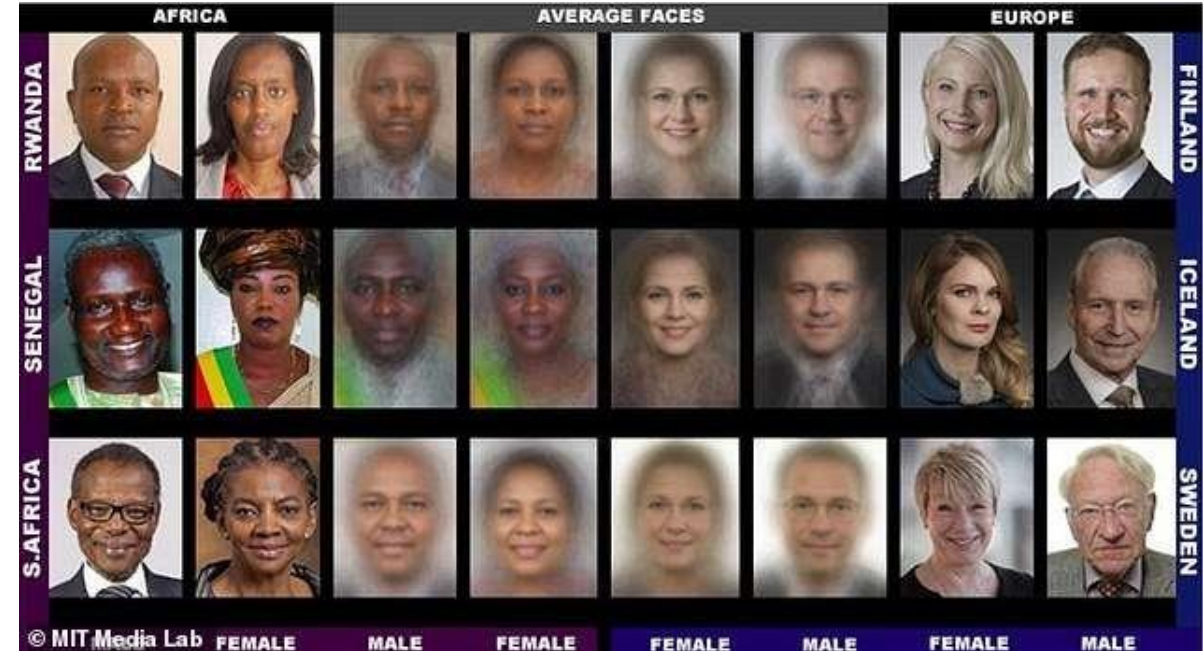
# Europeanisation and platformisation

Both are essentially top down practices but in a context of citizen/user input, feedback and actions that can shape them albeit asymmetrically as users/citizens do not have the same degree of power

Van Dijck: reclaiming European values/fundamental rights as a charter/constitution by which to govern platforms – cf constitutionalisation of platforms

Both processes involve exclusion and marginalisation impacting communities that are already vulnerabilised

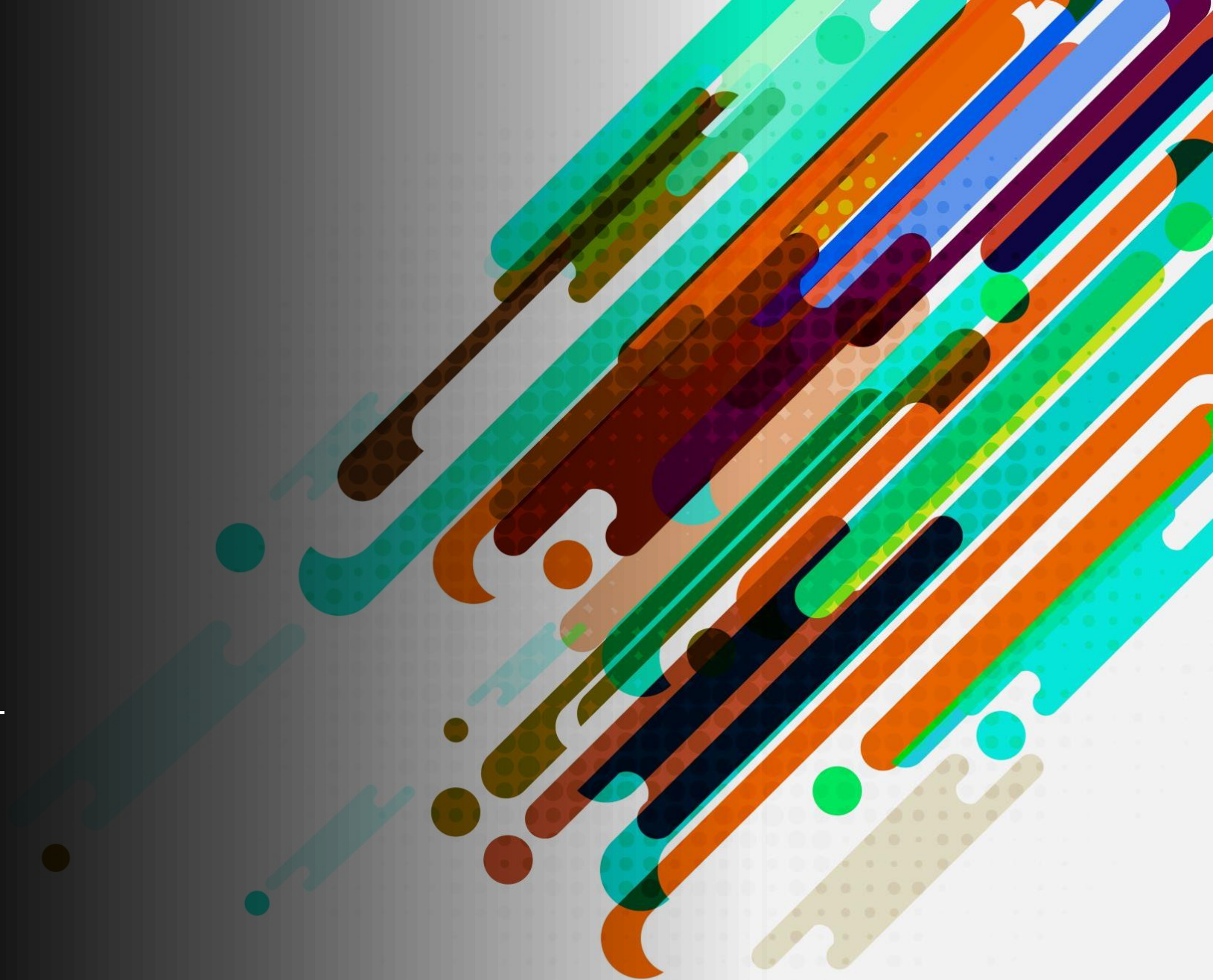
**In this context, what kind of bottom up processes from such groups challenge or present provocations for Europeanisation and platformisation as they are articulated together?**





# Three Provocations

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1

Using platforms for  
claims making in  
Europe

2

Reclaiming data as a  
resource

3

Creating safe spaces  
on platforms

# Europeanisation via platforms

- The use of platforms by transnational groups in order to articulate their political rights and make claims
- Creta and Denaro's (2022) work on refugees interned in camps in Libya and their use of smartphones to publish photos and stories on Facebook
  - Articulating claims based on human rights and calling on the EU border policy to directly align with its claims on human rights

*Counter-Narrating the Mediterranean Border Regime*

179



Photo 9.2. Malta's dangerous maneuvers at sea. Source: Alarm Phone (one of the authors).

Creta and Denaro, 2022: 179



# Claims making

- E.A.S.T. (Essential Autonomous Struggles Transnational) stage online assemblies to discuss political developments and determine actions
  - For e.g. on Nov 25th (day against gender based violence) they held an online assembly with interventions from « Iran, Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, Germany and the UK.”
  - Subsequently posts the video of the assembly on Facebook along with a summary of the interventions and points of the discussion



# Europeanisation from below via platforms

- Is not narrowly seen as a specific cultural project but rather as part of transnational struggles for freedom and equality
- Introduces shifts to the meaning of Europeanisation and its claims of 'value ownership' as in part the political demands formulated by such movements concern universal values for justice and freedom
- Challenges Europeanisation by confronting its rhetoric with reality
- Crucially, it is made possible because platforms allow for such lateral connections to be made

\*An occasion where we might say that platforms support users in making political claims challenging narrow conceptions of Europeanisation





# Platforms and dataification

- Data extraction and ownership a constitutive characteristic of platforms
- Couldry and Meijias (2019) convincingly demonstrated the dataification of social life and its use to generate profits
- One of the responses to this has been to resist data enclosures and rethink dataification in terms of the commons
- A theoretical approach that seeks to identify new forms of governance of data commons (see for e.g. Prainsack et al., 2022: Data solidarity: a blueprint for governing health futures
- An empirical approach that identifies initiatives that rely on data sharing for common benefit (as opposed to proprietary data for rent/profit)
  - For example, the US Data Commons Cooperative



Photos: Rock City Cafe and Roasting Company, ME, Tanka Resilient Agriculture, SD, North Wind Renewable Energy, WI

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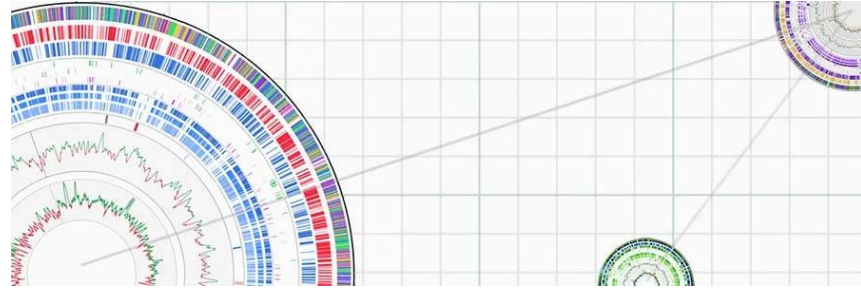
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# Platforms and dataification

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- Through the development and practice of co-owned data, this provocation is directed firstly towards corporate platforms and their business models and secondly towards European models of platform regulation that focus on the economic value of data (in the sense of profit generation);
- Additionally, in conceiving of a data commons, this provocation is implicitly critical of European approaches of data as private and morally belonging to individuals/citizens (for e.g. GDPR) and to the US approach of considering data as inalienable property of the individual.
- Finally, a data commons approach such as Prainsack (2019) develop an understand of **harmful exclusion (as opposed to predatory inclusion)**: the “logic, organization, and technique of including marginalized consumer-citizens into ostensibly democratizing mobility schemes on extractive terms.” [McMillan Cotton, 2020](#))



# Platform safe spaces



- While platforms are notoriously hosting harmful contents and occasionally even hate speech, some communities have developed a safe space approach which challenges existing platform rhetoric of 'management of hate' (see Siapera and Viejo Otero, 2021)
- Emerging out of the need for safety in both physical and digital environments, safe spaces can be genealogically linked to counterpublics (Fraser, 1992; Clarke-Parsons, 2017)
- They offer not only safety from harm but also the space to articulate hidden identities and plan strategies to push for recognition

# Safe spaces

- Clarke-Parsons' (2017) analysis of a feminist safe space straddling the offline-online division provides a clear understanding of safety as:
  - Safety from patriarchal-(trans)misogynist violence
  - Safety for all women/members of communities under attack
  - Safety to open up, share experiences and learn
- While platforms should be a safe space in their entirety, their prioritisation of 'voice' and 'freedom of expression' at all costs end up silencing certain communities
- The creation of safe spaces is led by communities themselves and challenges ideas/arguments that platforms cannot implement content moderation in ways that prioritise the protection of communities





# Safe spaces and platforms

- The bottom up creation of safe spaces as a form of counterpublics poses a challenge for Europeanisation as a discourse of integration as it relies on separating from mainstream publics
- It poses a challenge for platform discourses of online connection and voice as the very need for safe spaces on platforms means that they would not otherwise have 'voice'

## Our commitment to voice

The goal of our Community Standards is to create a place for expression and give people a voice. Meta wants people to be able to talk openly about the issues that matter to them, even if some may disagree or find them objectionable. In some cases, we allow content—which would otherwise go against our standards—if it's [newsworthy](#) and in the public interest. We do this only after weighing the public interest value against the risk of harm, and we look to international human rights standards to make these judgments.

Source: Facebook Community Standards

# To sum up

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- Europeanisation and platformisation represent top down discourses, processes and practices
  - Europeanisation includes an emphasis on shared ideas, norms and laws (such as fundamental rights)
  - Platformisation focuses on data extraction practices and governance mechanisms
- They are both challenged from the bottom up
  - Transnational activism challenges narrowly conceived Europeanisation
  - Data commons approaches challenge platform extractivism
  - Safe space creation challenges platform governance mechanisms





# And?

- These challenges open up a space for struggle for meaningful inclusion and protection from harm
- In so doing, they call upon us to reimagine both processes of Europeanisation and platformisation
  - Europeanisation beyond Europe
  - Platforms as socialized technologies for public benefit
- How likely is this to happen?