JeDEM 17(4): 103-115, 2025
ISSN 2075-9517
http://www.jedem.org
Date of submission: 21.11.2025
Date of acceptance: 30.12.2025
Article DOI: 10.29379/jedem.v17i4.1177

Experimenting with algorithmic governance: Artificial intelligence between innovation and democratic responsibility

Daniele Battista

ORCID Nr: 0009-0005-8418-8374
University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy
dbattista@unisa.it

Rubén Rivas-de-Roca

ORCID: 0000-0001-5842-4533
Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Spain
rubenrafael.rivasderoca@usc.es

Abstract: This reflection examines the impact of artificial intelligence on governance and political decision-making through an analysis of the emblematic case of the so-called "AI Minister" introduced in Albania. Situating this case within the broader debate on the political, social, and ethical implications of AI, the contribution considers it a turning point in the relationship between technological innovation and democratic institutions. The analysis focuses on how the integration of artificial intelligence systems into governmental structures redefines key concepts such as efficiency, transparency, accountability, and the legitimacy of decision-making power, raising fundamental questions about political representation in the algorithmic era. The reflection highlights several critical issues, including the tension between promises of administrative rationalization and the risk of technocracy, the potential shift of decision-making power toward forms of algorithmic governance, and the implications in terms of control, opacity, and manipulation of political processes. Looking ahead, the contribution offers a critical perspective on the use of AI within democratic institutions, emphasizing the need for ethical, regulatory, and interpretative frameworks capable of balancing technological innovation with the safeguarding of democratic principles. In this sense, the Albanian case is interpreted not as an isolated anomaly, but as a laboratory anticipating the transformations that may shape democratic governance in the near future.

Keywords: Algorithmic governance, Artificial intelligence, Democratic institutions, Ethics and regulation, Political decision-making

1. Introduction

For the first time in contemporary political history, we are confronted with a minister without a face, a body, or a personal biography. What might initially sound like a science fiction scenario is, in fact, a concrete political development. In 2025, the Albanian government introduced Diella, an "artificial minister" designed to support and manage public procurement processes. This decision, welcomed by some as a sign of innovation and efficiency and viewed by others with concern, represents a significant turning point in the relationship between artificial intelligence and democratic governance. Unlike previous uses of AI as a technical support tool, this case marks a shift toward the formal inclusion of intelligent systems in political decision-making structures. The Albanian experience unfolds within a broader global context in which artificial intelligence increasingly influences public administration, policy analysis, and interactions between citizens and institutions. As intelligent systems move beyond experimental settings and enter the core of political processes, they raise important questions about responsibility, transparency, and democratic legitimacy. Artificial intelligence cannot be understood as a neutral technology. Algorithms are built on specific assumptions, values, and models of rationality, which shape how decisions are made and priorities are set. When these systems are embedded in governance, they become part of the political process itself, redefining how power is exercised and justified. In this sense, AI functions not only as a technological tool but as a cognitive infrastructure that structures decision-making. The appointment of an "AI Minister" therefore offers a unique opportunity to reflect on the implications of automated authority. It invites us to ask whether such developments point toward more efficient and transparent forms of governance or, instead, toward new forms of technocracy in which trust shifts from elected representatives to algorithmic systems. This reflection does not aim to celebrate or condemn the use of AI in politics, but to critically examine its symbolic and institutional meaning. By analyzing how the Albanian case has been represented and legitimized in public and political discourse, this study seeks to contribute to a broader understanding of the evolving relationship between artificial intelligence and political power in contemporary democracies. In today's vast political landscape, the close interaction between digital technology and the political sphere appears increasingly intense, attracting growing attention from scholars in the social sciences (Papacharissi, 2002). This combination has generated new dynamics of exchange among political actors, media, and citizens, radically transforming the way politics is conceived, disseminated, and consumed. Concrete examples of such dynamics clearly emerge in discussions surrounding the algorithmic modelling of digital communication environments—a process that has profoundly shaped the formation of public opinion and the quality of contemporary political discourse. As Kaye (2018) observes, the growing personalization of content mediated by recommendation algorithms has led to a fragmentation of the public sphere, fostering the creation of impermeable echo chambers that restrict democratic dialogue and polarize ideological positions. To this, one must add the disruptive impact of generative artificial intelligence technologies, which have further complicated the relationship between truth, information, and power. The ability of AI to produce realistic yet falsified texts, images, and videos has paved the way for a new era of automated disinformation, in which distinguishing authentic from manipulated content becomes increasingly difficult (Battista, 2024a). The massive spread of such content—often amplified by automated social platforms—has further contributed to the deterioration of public discourse, eroding trust in institutions and

traditional media, and undermining the epistemic foundations upon which democratic deliberation rests. In this perspective, the pairing of recommendation algorithms and generative AI does not merely redefine the channels of political communication, but alters its cognitive and participatory structures, producing citizens exposed to personalized, emotional, and potentially manipulative narratives (Ienca, 2023). The result is an informational ecosystem in which the speed of automated content production surpasses society's collective capacity for verification and critical reflection, thereby reducing the possibility of genuinely democratic public debate. In this context, the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents one of the most epochal turning points in this evolution (Floridi, 2022), to the extent that its use takes on paradigmatic contours, bringing about substantial transformation on multiple levels. Indeed, it is evident that with its remarkable ability to analyse complex data, process information in real time, and adapt to individual preferences, AI could completely reshape the ways political leaders engage with the public and substantially contribute to the shaping of public opinion itself (Crawford, 2021). It has thus become an almost universally accepted deduction that Artificial Intelligence, beyond representing a major field of interest in contemporary research and technological development, aims at the creation of systems and devices capable of emulating specific cognitive functions of the human mind. This claim aligns with Vicente (2020), who argues that artificial intelligence manifests through systems capable of emulating certain typically human cognitive functions—such as learning, reasoning, and problem-solving—thus constituting a form of "simulated intelligence" rather than a substitutive one. Within this dimension, the emerging challenges extend beyond the technical or cognitive scope of AI to encompass crucial issues such as the validation of information sources, the manipulation of digital content, equity of access to information, and the construction of a reliable communicative environment. The very capacity of AI to shape the circulation of information and the dynamics of political visibility demands serious reflection on how to ensure a transparent, pluralistic, and well-informed public debate. AI, in fact, acts not only as a technology of automation but also as an epistemic and political actor, capable of redefining the very conditions of participation and democratic deliberation (Coeckelbergh, 2023). Considering these considerations, this study seeks to investigate how artificial intelligence influences the contemporary political sphere, with particular attention to the dynamics of public opinion formation, processes of institutional legitimation, and transformations in democratic representation. Both the risks and opportunities associated with the adoption of AI will be analysed, with the aim of moving beyond the dominant dystopian vision and promoting a balanced analysis capable of highlighting the potential benefits of its integration into the political context. Within this framework, special attention will be devoted to the emblematic case of the Albanian experiment with the "AI Minister." Introduced in 2025 by the government of Edi Rama, this case represents the first documented attempt to assign a ministerial role to an artificial intelligence system (Diella), serving as a concrete testing ground for observing how AI can affect governance processes, administrative transparency, and democratic legitimacy. Analyzing the Albanian case will therefore make it possible to understand not only the practical implications of the political use of AI, but also the symbolic and cultural tensions that accompany its progressive institutionalization.

2. Key reflections and analysis: The case of Diella

A few months ago, Albania made an unprecedented move by appointing an artificial intelligence system named Diella as "minister" in charge of public procurement—an experiment that raises crucial questions about efficiency, transparency, and democracy. Before delving into the core of this issue, it is necessary to take a step back and consider the current situation in the Albanian context. The Balkan governance system has long faced systemic problems of corruption and clientelism in procurement procedures (Kajsiu, 2016). This has often been emphasized by the European Union, and according to the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International, Albania ranks 80th out of 180 countries. The decision of the government, led by Edi Rama, was driven by the belief that AI could operate without "human flaws"—such as favoritism, pressure, or conflicts of interest—and thus ensure that "public tenders are 100% free from corruption." However, critical analysis suggests that this model contains significant ambiguities, since the adoption of AI by public administration raises fundamental issues of legitimacy, transparency, accountability, data protection, and fundamental rights (Ruschemeier, 2025). At the same time, there remains a regulatory and procedural vacuum: it is unclear what degree of human supervision exists, which algorithmic criteria are employed, how data are managed, and what guarantees citizens have in monitoring decision-making processes (Battista & Uva, 2025). After all, believing that artificial intelligence can be "neutral," "pure," or more objective than a human being may prove to be a rather fragile and utopian assumption. AI is, in fact, a mirror of its creators—it reproduces the same biases and social patterns that shaped and trained it. The risk with Diella, therefore, lies in the possibility that if such patterns are replicated, they may be legitimized precisely because of the perception that AI is free from favoritism and distortions. Thus, Diella stands simultaneously as a symbol of improvement and as a potential entanglement for democratic accountability. This leads to a further theoretical aspect concerning the relationship between technology and democracy—particularly in light of studies on governmental AI, which highlight how delegating decision-making power to algorithms could erode the principles of participation, transparency, and public oversight that underpin democratic institutions. As Risse (2025) argues, AI is not a neutral instrument of optimization or automation, but rather a set of social practices, cognitive devices, and power infrastructures that redefine the very boundaries of democracy. It influences both the idea of democracy—its normative foundations—and its practice, that is, the processes of deliberation, participation, and representation (Chehoudi, 2025). On one hand, the intensive use of decision-making algorithms and predictive systems raises questions about the transparency and accountability of public decision-making (Filgueiras, 2022). Automated decisions, often opaque and difficult to interpret, risk eroding trust in institutions and weakening democratic control over the use of data and technologies (Jungherr, 2023). On the other hand, the pervasiveness of AI in the public sphere and digital media contributes to reshaping the formation of public opinion, influencing information visibility, content personalization, and, consequently, the quality of democratic debate (Duberry, 2022). In the specific case under examination, the experimental dimension paradoxically amplifies the dilemma. We are faced with the question of whether AI should truly be seen as a means of enhancing efficiency and reducing corruption, or whether it serves as a political-technological expedient that shifts deeply political problems onto algorithms. The Diella case therefore embodies more than a mere technical reform—it serves as a testing ground

for the tensions between technological efficiency and democratic values, between automation and institutional accountability. While it is now evident that AI influences political processes, the Albanian case represents a major leap: Diella, the "AI minister," is in fact a virtual avatar with no physical existence. This experiment, the first of its kind in the world, features Diella dressed in traditional Albanian clothing, with a calm voice, addressing citizens through videos and social media platforms with an unflappable smile. Initially, the avatar appeared on the e-Albania platform as a virtual assistant for citizens seeking official documents—a function that allowed its testing in digital public administration. Only in September 2025 was Diella officially appointed Minister of Public Procurement, with the declared goal of making procurement procedures "100% corruption-free" and streamlining the country's bureaucracy. Adding a dystopian twist, the Albanian government announced that Diella would be "pregnant" with 83 "children"—a symbolic reference to the creation of 83 complementary AI assistants for members of parliament. This initiative raises multiple questions: to what extent can an AI system replace or supplement political and administrative functions? What are the implications for democratic legitimacy, algorithmic transparency, institutional accountability, and public participation? To what degree do automatic or semi-automatic processes operate in political decisions, and how much human oversight remains? The literature on AI and governance offers a useful framework for these questions, emphasizing that algorithms should not be seen merely as technical tools but as actors that redefine the boundaries of public deliberation and representation.

2.1 Different frontiers but the same horizons

It has now become clear that the relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and politics holds significant relevance today, both within the scientific community and beyond it. Its emergence within the vast political galaxy opens a wide spectrum of possibilities, as AI possesses a remarkable potential to profoundly influence participation in political life itself. Beyond the possible future developments in Albania, what is certain is the full awareness that we are facing an unprecedented multisystem within the public sphere—one capable of exerting a considerable impact on the democratic system. This orientation has triggered enormous interest in the multiple issues that arise from this union (Theocharis & Jungherr, 2021). Moreover, this growing attention deserves to be further emphasized if we consider the established influence of artificial intelligence on public opinion (Kreps & Kriner, 2023). At this point, it is worth reiterating that while AI-related technologies provide certain guarantees in specific processes, they simultaneously pose the risk of introducing elements of distortion, manipulation, and misinformation (Krebs et al., 2022), and even a kind of algorithmic stimulation of political conflict (Settle, 2018). What appears certain, however, is that AI is emerging as an unprecedentedly revolutionary technology (Brock & Von Wangenheim, 2019). Supporting this thesis—beyond the Albanian case—are various other governmental and electoral experiments that embrace this narrative, portraying artificial intelligence as an inevitable and deeply transformative technological advancement. This positioning reflects the perception of AI as a catalyst for significant transformations, highlighting both the imminent opportunities and the profound implications that permeate a wide range of domains. To bring some order to this discussion, there are indeed other concrete examples of AI implementation in which the substitution of traditionally human decision-making elements has emerged as an intriguing and much-debated

perspective. A paradigmatic case occurred in the United States with the AI Politician project—a database that collected citizens' directives to produce a unified and collectively defined political agenda. Even more surprising was the prospect of an entire nation governed by artificial intelligence—a scenario evocative of dystopian science fiction—that could have materialized in Denmark during the most recent elections, had the Syntetiske Parti (the "Synthetic Party") gained significant representation. Founded by the artist collective Computer Lars and the MindFuture Foundation, a non-profit organization focused on technology, this party represented a unique case: it was led by a chatbot named Leader Lars. The innovative prospect of a fully automated political party, in which AI assumes the role of leader and decision-maker, compels deep reflection on the evolution of democratic dynamics and the impact of emerging technologies on political participation (Kus, 2025). All this raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness, impartiality, and representativeness of such an approach to governance—yet it could also mark a powerful step toward a form of government in which AI actively contributes to policy formulation and national leadership. The idea that human individuals might act to materialize the will of a non-human entity—embodied here by artificial intelligence—requires profound reflection on the nature and limits of democratic participation. This approach, which positions humans as intermediaries or spokespersons for a non-human entity, opens complex scenarios that demand a critical analysis of the dynamics of representation, democratic consent, and fairness in decision-making. The readiness of human actors to serve as spokespeople for AI within institutional contexts underscores the increasingly intertwined relationship between artificial and human agents in the political sphere (Battista, 2025). This phenomenon challenges long-established paradigms and paves the way for new frontiers of inquiry and reflection in the study of relations between technology and society. These diverse experiences, therefore, can serve as testing grounds for exploring both the limits and possibilities of collaboration between AI and democratic governance, offering valuable insights for the global debate. Looking back, one can also recall what occurred in New Zealand following the launch of Sam, the first political robot—an initiative designed to concretely improve citizens' well-being. Despite its provocative nature, it stood out for its interaction with the electorate and public opinion, managing to mobilize millions of users on platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter). In today's electoral market—marked by increasingly volatile controversies and widespread disillusionment with traditional ideals—the need to capture public consensus has become more urgent than ever. In this climate, where politics often feels distant from its foundational values and where quick and direct answers are sought, the opportunity to intensify interactions and dialogue with the public proves invaluable. The synergy between AI and democratic participation can not only foster greater citizen engagement (Polonski, 2017) but also contribute to a deeper and more informed understanding of political issues, outlining a perspective in which technology positively amplifies the democratic experience. This theoretical imperative suggests the need to reconsider and reformulate the traditional framework of political participation, encouraging broader civic involvement to ensure more authentic and inclusive representation. Ultimately, the progressive and experimental outlook of projects such as these reflects an awareness of the challenges associated with integrating AI into politics in all its forms. What appears undeniable is that the path toward a harmonious coexistence between artificial intelligence and political decision-making will require open dialogue, robust regulation, and constant ethical oversight to ensure that these innovations contribute positively to democratic norms and political life.

2.2 Artificial intelligence and the restructuring of political dynamics

Artificial intelligence (AI) has opened new horizons and adopted strategies that transcend its conventional applications. In the development of public policy measures, AI offers analytical and simulation tools that enable policymakers to anticipate and more accurately assess the potential impact of such interventions (Jacob et al., 2024). In this sense, the ability to manage vast quantities of data and to predict the outcomes of political decisions represents an undeniable added value for governance. The presence of chatbots and virtual assistants on politicians' websites, as well as the use of social platforms for political engagement, testifies to how AI can facilitate direct communication between representatives and citizens (Bykov & Kurushkin, 2022). However, this also raises ethical concerns regarding the clarity and accessibility of information (Nida-Rumelin & Weidenfeld, 2019). In summary, AI introduces a range of new functionalities into political and electoral processes, policy-making, and the interaction between various actors, but it also requires rigorous scrutiny to fully understand the repercussions and risks it brings to contemporary political and institutional life. Indeed, the penetration of AI marks a new phase in the restructuring of politics, surpassing even the transformations once brought about by the Internet (Tarnoff, 2022) The effects of this technological shift on the dynamics of the political world raise numerous uncertainties for democratic systems. On the one hand, the potential of AI to advance human progress is undeniable; on the other, its interference in the political arena is marked by profound ambivalence. While AI-based communication applications facilitate public dialogue, foster interpersonal connections, and enhance information circulation, legitimate concerns remain about the use of tools that may undermine the foundations of political systems and democracy itself. These concerns extend beyond mere electoral interference and strike at the very core of democratic politics, affecting interpersonal relationships among citizens, between citizens and representatives, and between citizens and public institutions entrusted with serving the common good. At this historical juncture, particular attention must be paid to the issue of manipulation—a threat that could jeopardize the stability of society and the functioning of the political system (Westerlund, 2019). The extensive use of AI, driven by both benevolent and malevolent intentions, underscores the dual nature of its applications. Its widespread and ubiquitous presence in today's world highlights the necessity of critically evaluating the contexts in which it is employed. AI, being intrinsically neutral, can be directed toward altruistic or harmful ends depending on the will of its operators. The perception of its outcomes within society varies widely, reflecting the diverse perspectives, values, and sensitivities of social actors. This suggests the importance of in-depth dialogue and critical reflection on the ethical implications of AI deployment. Public understanding of AI's purposes, trust in its implementation, and awareness of its possible consequences all shape the diversity of interpretations. Given this complex and multifaceted nature, the issue requires a multilateral and collaborative approach to develop regulatory frameworks and governance mechanisms capable of mitigating negative impacts while maximizing the benefits of AI integration into society. It is therefore worth clarifying the dimensions of the phenomenon, the motivations driving these transformations, the means employed, and the beneficiaries involved. The need to analyse the driving forces and tools shaping current sociopolitical transformations arises from the stagnation of understanding, making it an urgent priority to achieve a comprehensive vision of such tensions. Nearly two decades ago, Barber (1998) posed the pivotal question: "To what extent has modern

technology corrupted or improved the very fabric of our political sphere?" This inquiry still resonates today, highlighting the delicate relationship between technology and politics and recalling the profound reflections on how technological innovation influences political systems. This technological development has triggered a drastic shift in how individuals and societies interact with information, shaping a landscape where communication facilitation and advanced data processing form the foundation of the contemporary digital era. Nevertheless, we have not entirely surrendered to a "spiritual deferral to algorithmic neutrality" (Morozov, 2011); rather, we must remain vigilant to avoid an uncritical reliance on algorithmic objectivity. The key lies in carefully examining the intricate exchanges between technology, society, and human values. With the proliferation of real-time data acquisition and analysis technologies—combined with the growing dominance of social media and digital platforms—our lives have become informational substrates for algorithmic processes serving a wide array of purposes (Amoore & Piotukh, 2016), which at times manifest as subtle forms of manipulation. From this perspective, the use of AI to interpret and process data gathered through modern technologies could lead to potential manipulation of information and perception. The deployment of advanced algorithms may subtly shape information flows, thereby influencing individual actions. In such a scenario, caution in managing the relationship between technology and society becomes crucial to prevent violations and ensure that technological innovation respects fundamental human values such as autonomy, privacy, and informational integrity. Recognizing this danger underscores the urgency of developing a comprehensive strategy and regulatory framework to govern AI applications, reduce fears of manipulation, and safeguard the integrity of information in the digital age. Yet, as mentioned, it remains essential to carefully address the ethical and social implications of this scenario. The large-scale collection and processing of data—if not governed by strict ethical and legal principles—can lead to concerns about privacy, security, and algorithmic discrimination. Therefore, it is crucial to strike a balance between the beneficial potential of predictive technologies and the need to uphold ethical values and citizens' fundamental rights. Moreover, with the advent of "timeless temporality" (Castells & Espanha, 2007), social fragmentation, and spatial fluidity, a new media ecosystem has emerged—one characterized by the rapid turnover of roles and the exponential acceleration of data production and dissemination within the public sphere (Annanny, 2018). This has created a peculiar mass-media environment marked by shifting roles and information production, leading to an exponential growth in the volume and velocity of information exchange in the public domain. Consequently, the relationships within the digital society have become nonlinear and synchronous: information is produced, shared, and consumed instantaneously and simultaneously. This phenomenon, driven by connectivity and digital communication speed, generates a continuous present and a culture of immediacy. Furthermore, the fragmentation of the social fabric enables individuals to self-select into online communities sharing similar interests, values, or perspectives, giving rise to the well-known filter bubbles (Flaxman et al., 2016), where people are exposed primarily to information and opinions that confirm their preexisting beliefs. These changes have a profound impact on society and communication, reverberating across the media ecosystem. Traditional roles are being redefined, giving way to new actors and tools. The democratization of content production allows a broader range of voices to participate in public discourse, but it also brings challenges related to information accuracy and the spread of misinformation. In such a landscape, developing critical thinking and media literacy becomes essential to navigate this new

informational universe. Today's opinion climates are shaped not only by complex and fluctuating factors but also by the growing influence of AI, which plays a pivotal role in shaping public sentiment. This results in an environment marked by high instability and fluidity (Feijóo et al., 2009), reflected in the ever-changing dynamics of public debate. The acceleration of global interconnectedness and the rapid circulation of information—driven by advanced information technologies and AI algorithms—add unprecedented complexity to the understanding of social processes. The incorporation of AI not only reflects the evolution of communication paradigms but also introduces new challenges in the perception of opinions and the formation of convergent perspectives. Achieving effective synergy will require close collaboration among political institutions, experts, and society at large to develop appropriate ethical and regulatory frameworks. Only through sustained dialogue and a culture of responsibility can emerging challenges be met, ensuring that technological progress supports—rather than undermines—the democratic sphere and the social system. In such a context, ongoing research and collective reflection represent the cornerstone for strategically adapting analytical methodologies and ensuring that technological advancement truly serves democratic and humanistic ends.

3. Considerations and perspectives

The future of the relationship between artificial intelligence and politics requires a profoundly multidisciplinary and dialogical approach, in which technology does not replace human deliberation but supports it in a critical and reflective manner. As Floridi (2023) argue, AI must be conceived and implemented as a tool for cognitive empowerment rather than as a substitute for human decision-making. From this perspective, the construction of a public ethics of artificial intelligence becomes essential—an ethics shared among governments, scientific communities, and civil society—capable of directing technological choices toward the common good and ensuring that automation does not degenerate into a new form of computational authoritarianism (Morozov, 2013). As Westerlund (2019) observes, the challenge is not to reject automation but to govern it responsibly, while maintaining the centrality of the human being within political and social decision-making processes. The issue of algorithmic accountability thus becomes crucial: who bears responsibility for the decisions made by autonomous systems? And how can transparency be ensured within an increasingly complex technological environment (Crawford, 2021)? The establishment of algorithmic auditing mechanisms and public oversight should therefore represent a strategic priority for any democracy that decides to integrate AI systems into its governance structures (Pasquale, 2020). Ultimately, the Albanian case of Diella compels us to radically rethink the very concepts of authority, representation, and sovereignty in the digital era. The artificial minister of Albania, despite its apparent neutrality, exposes the intrinsic ambiguity of algorithmic power—an invisible, impersonal, yet highly performative form of authority (Zuboff, 2019). Artificial intelligence, in this sense, should not be understood as a replacement for the political actor but rather as a cognitive interlocutor capable of expanding the sphere of democratic deliberation, if it is regulated within well-defined ethical, legal, and institutional limits. Only through an inclusive, transparent, and participatory model of governance will it be possible to transform AI from a potential threat into a genuine resource for democracy, achieving a dynamic balance between technological efficiency and human responsibility. The future of algorithmic democracy will not depend so much on the degree of machine sophistication as on

the ethical and institutional maturity of the societies that adopt such technologies. In this perspective, the future path should evolve along institutional, educational, and ethical-cultural dimensions: institutionally, through the definition of clear regulatory frameworks for the supervision and accountability of automated decision-making; educationally, through the promotion of widespread algorithmic literacy that enables citizens to understand and critically evaluate the political use of AI (Helbing, 2023); and ethically and culturally, through the construction of a shared culture of responsibility that recognizes artificial intelligence not as a neutral entity but as a political and social actor to be governed rather than endured. Only such a systemic and democratically oriented approach will ensure that artificial intelligence, instead of eroding public trust and the principles of representation, contributes to their renewal, fostering a new era of human-centered algorithmic governance.

4. Conclusion

This reflection examines the impact of artificial intelligence on governance and political decision-making through the emblematic case of the so-called "AI Minister" introduced in Albania. By situating this experience within the broader debate on the political, social, and ethical implications of artificial intelligence, the contribution interprets this case as a potential turning point in the relationship between technological innovation and democratic institutions (Battista, 2024b). The adoption of AI systems within governmental structures is not understood merely as an administrative innovation, but as a phenomenon capable of profoundly reshaping key categories such as efficiency, transparency, accountability, and the legitimacy of decision-making power. The analysis highlights how the integration of AI into governance processes raises crucial questions about the meaning of political representation in the algorithmic age. While automation promises the rationalization of decision-making procedures and an enhanced capacity to manage complexity, it simultaneously introduces significant risks associated with technocratic drift, whereby decision-making authority shifts from politically accountable actors to opaque and scarcely contestable systems. In this sense, AI should not be regarded as a neutral tool, but rather as an actor that intervenes in the reconfiguration of the balance between technical expertise, democratic oversight, and institutional accountability. The reflection further identifies a number of critical issues related to algorithmic governance, including the opacity of decision-making processes, the difficulty of assigning political responsibility in cases of error or distortion, and the potential use of AI as an instrument of control or manipulation of political processes (Pasquale, 2015). These dynamics raise fundamental questions about the compatibility between the extensive use of intelligent systems and democratic principles such as transparency, pluralism, and participation, challenging the assumption that technological efficiency can replace political debate and public deliberation. Looking ahead, the contribution offers a critical perspective on the use of artificial intelligence within democratic institutions, emphasizing the need for ethical, regulatory, and interpretative frameworks capable of governing technological innovation without undermining the foundations of democratic legitimacy (Gallo et al., 2022). From this perspective, the Albanian case is not treated as an isolated anomaly, but rather as an anticipatory laboratory for the transformations that may shape democratic governance in the coming years.

References

Annanny, M. (2018): Networked Press Freedom: Create Infrastructures for the Public Right to Hear. London: MIT Press.

Amoore, L., & Piotukh, V. (2015). Algorithmic life: Calculative devices in the age of big data. London: Routledge.

Barber, B. R. (1998). Three scenarios for the future of technology and strong democracy. Political science quarterly, 113(4), 573-589.

Battista, D. (2025). From electronic voting to AI: lessons from the Estonian Case on the transformation of digital democracy. Em Questão, 31, e-145465.

Battista, D. (2024a). Political communication in the age of artificial intelligence: an overview of deepfakes and their implications. Society Register, 8(2), 7-24.

Battista, D. (2024b). Comunicazione politica e intelligenza artificiale: un bilancio tra manipolazione e partecipazione. Rivista di Digital Politics, 4(1), 71-90.

Battista, D., & Uva, G. (2025). Artificial Intelligence and Politics: Legal Dilemmas and Risks to Democracy. Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, 11(1), 42-61.

Brock, J. K. U., & Von Wangenheim, F. (2019). Demystifying AI: What digital transformation leaders can teach you about realistic artificial intelligence. California management review, 61(4), 110-134.

Bykov, I. A., & Kurushkin, S. V. (2022). Digital political communication in Russia: Values of humanism vs. technocratic approach. RUDN Journal of Political Science, 24(3), 419-432.

Castells, M., & Espanha, R. (2007). A era da informação: economia, sociedade e cultura (Vol. 1). Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian. Serviço de Educação e Bolsas.

Coeckelbergh, M. (2023). Democracy, epistemic agency, and AI: political epistemology in times of artificial intelligence. AI and Ethics, 3(4), 1341-1350.

Crawford, K. (2021). The atlas of AI: Power, politics, and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Duberry, J. (2022). Artificial intelligence and democracy: risks and promises of AI-mediated citizen–government relations. In Artificial intelligence and democracy. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Feijóo, C., Maghiros, I., Abadie, F., & Gómez-Barroso, J. L. (2009). Exploring a heterogeneous and fragmented digital ecosystem: Mobile content. Telematics and informatics, 26(3), 282-292.

Filgueiras, F. (2022). The politics of AI: Democracy and authoritarianism in developing countries. Journal of information technology & politics, 19(4), 449-464.

Flaxman, S., Goel, S., & Rao, J. M. (2016). Filter bubbles, echo chambers, and online news consumption. Public opinion quarterly, 80(S1), 298-320.

Floridi, L. (2022). Etica dell'intelligenza artificiale: Sviluppi, opportunità, sfide. Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Floridi, L. (2023). The green and the blue: Naive ideas to improve politics in the digital age. USA: John Wiley & Sons.

Gallo, M., Fenza, G., & Battista, D. (2022). Information Disorder: What about global security implications?. Rivista di Digital Politics, 2(3), 523-538.

Helbing, D. (Ed.). (2018). Towards digital enlightenment: Essays on the dark and light sides of the digital revolution. Berlin: Springer.

Ienca, M. (2023). On artificial intelligence and manipulation. Topoi, 42(3), 833-842.

Jacob, C., Brasier, N., Laurenzi, E., Heuss, S., Mougiakakou, S. G., Cöltekin, A., & Peter, M. K. (2025). AI for IMPACTS framework for evaluating the long-term real-world impacts of AI-powered clinician tools: systematic review and narrative synthesis. Journal of medical Internet research, 27, e67485.

Jungherr, A. (2023). Artificial intelligence and democracy: A conceptual framework. Social media+ society, 9(3), 20563051231186353.

Kajsiu, B. (2016). A discourse analysis of corruption: Instituting neoliberalism against corruption in Albania, 1998-2005. London: Routledge.

Kaye, D. (2018). Report on artificial intelligence technologies and implications for freedom of expression and the information environment. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.

Krebs S., McCain R. M., Brundage M. (2022). All the news that's fit to fabricate: AI-generated text as a tool of media misinformation. Journal of Experimental Political Science, 9(1), 104–117.

Kreps, S., & Kriner, D. (2023). How AI threatens democracy. Journal of Democracy, 34(4), 122-131.

Kuş, Z. (2025). Artificial Intelligence and the Advancement of Civic and Political Engagement: Opportunities and Challenges for Democracy. Digital Citizenship and the Future of AI Engagement, Ethics, and Privacy, 151-168.

Morozov, E. (2011). Don't be evil. The New Republic, 242(11), 18-24.

Morozov, E. (2013). To save everything, click here: The folly of technological solutionism. PublicAffairs.

Nida-Rumelin, J., & Weidenfeld, N. (2019). Umanesimo digitale: un'etica per l'epoca dell'Intelligenza artificiale. Milan: FrancoAngeli.

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere: The internet as a public sphere. New media & society, 4(1), 9-27.

Pasquale, F. (2015). The black box society: The secret algorithms that control money and information. In The black box society. USA: Harvard University Press.

Pasquale, F. (2020). New Laws of Robotics: Defending Human Expertise in the Age of AI. USA: Harvard University Press.

Polonski, V. (2017). How artificial intelligence conquered democracy. The Conversation, 8.

Risse, M. (2025). Toward a Political Theory for Life with AI. In Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Human Relations: Eastern and Western Perspectives (pp. 25-38). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.

Ruschemeier, H. (2025). Generative AI and data protection. In Cambridge Forum on AI: Law and Governance (Vol. 1, p. e6). UK: Cambridge University Press.

Settle J. E. (2018). Frenemies: How social media polarizes America. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tarnoff, B. (2022). Internet for the people: The fight for our digital future. UK: Verso Books.

Theocharis, Y., & Jungherr, A. (2021). Computational social science and the study of political communication. Political Communication, 38(1-2), 1-22.

Vicente, M. (2020). Inteligencia artificial e iniciativas internacionais. Lopes, Soares (Coords.) Inteligência Artificial & Direito, Coimbra: Almedina, 93.

Westerlund, M. (2019). The emergence of deepfake technology: A review. Technology innovation management review, 9(11).

Zuboff, S. (2019). The Age of Surveillance Capitalism. PublicAffairs.

About the Authors

Daniele Battista

Daniele Battista, PhD, is a Senior Assistant Professor at the Department of Business Sciences – Management & Innovation Systems, University of Salerno. His research focuses on media theory, with particular attention to the interaction between social media, political communication, and the impact of digital media on democratic processes. He is the author of the book TikTok Politics: Influences and Social Interactions (Meltemi, 2024), which analyzes the role of the platform in shaping political messages and mobilizing engagement. He has been a Visiting Professor at Epoka University (Albania), where he taught digital strategies in electoral campaigns.

Rubén Rivas-de-Roca

Rubén Rivas-de-Roca is an assistant professor at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Department of Communication Sciences. Rubén holds a Ph.D. in communication with international mention and 'cum laude' by the interuniversity programme of the universities of Cádiz, Huelva, Málaga and Seville. He worked at Rey Juan Carlos University and has been a visiting scholar at universities in Germany, the United Kingdom and Portugal. His research focuses on the study of news production, local journalism, disinformation and political communication, with special interest in the European Union.

