OBSERVATORY ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY

FEASIBILITY STUDY

SEPTEMBER 2022

Forum on Information & Democracy

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

By Shoshana Zuboff, Co-chair of the prefiguration group of the Observatory

From the dawn of the public internet and the world wide web in the mid-1990s, the democratic nations failed to construct a coherent political vision of a digital century that advances democratic values, principles, and governance. This failure left a void where democracy should be, a void that was quickly filled and tenaciously defended by surveillance capitalism. A handful of companies evolved from tiny startups into trillion-dollar vertically integrated global surveillance empires thriving on an economic foundation so novel, improbable, and antidemocratic as to have escaped critical analysis for many years: the commodification of human behavior and its operationalization in the secret massive-scale extraction of human-generated data: everyone, all the time, everywhere.

The void was a political failure that forfeited the critical first decades of the digital century to surveillance capitalism and deprived an increasingly connected world community of a clear path to a democratic and digital future. Whole societies are abandoned to new forms of digitally mediated violence from both market and state actors.

Two decades later and in the absence of effective democratic opposition, the surveillance giants and their ecosystems now constitute a sweeping political-economic institutional order. It migrates across sectors and economies. It owns, operates, and mediates today's digital information and communication spaces according to profit maximizing imperatives for which corrupt information is positively correlated with revenues, and information integrity is bad for business.

Surveillance capitalism has failed any reasonable test of responsible global stewardship of digital information and communications. Over the course of its two decades of development, it has been responsible for the wholesale destruction of privacy, the rise of information chaos, new forms of influence and control over individual and collective behavior, the privatization of the public square, and dramatic new asymmetries of knowledge and power. These harms are individually and collectively catastrophic for democracy. In the absence of new public institutions, charters of rights, and legal frameworks purpose-built for a democratic digital century, citizens march naked, easy prey for all who steal and hunt with human data.

The abdication of digital information and communication spaces to surveillance capitalism has become the meta-crisis of every republic because it obstructs solutions to all other crises. The democratic order will only survive this contest if it finally engages with fundamental questions, starting with this: What institutional capabilities will ensure information integrity for the sake of advancing democratic rights, values, principles, social solidarity, and governance? This is the quality of invention required for responsible democratic stewardship of our digital information and communication spaces.

Such invention will require new forms of independent public institutions and legal frameworks that protect citizens from digital violence whether it originates in the market or the state. It will liberate the digital landscape for a new era in which data and knowledge are tethered to the needs of people and society and data collection is bound to fundamental human rights.

These challenges shape the historical mandate for the International Observatory on Information and Democracy—its purpose and potential. The Observatory aims to be a champion of the research and civil society communities dedicated to understanding the information crisis, an aggregator and synthesizer

of relevant knowledge, and a conduit of that knowledge to political leaders, lawmakers, and policy makers. The potential for success is enhanced by the fact that we undertake this mission as the forces of democratic resistance gather strength.

The year 2022 alone has seen the European Parliament's historic passage of the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act, which together have broken the sound barrier of surveillance capitalism's inevitability and shifted our trajectory away from the iceberg of dystopia. The message went out: the digital must live in democracy's house, not as a troubled child but as a positive and productive member of the family.

In 2022, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee, led by its recent recipients journalists Maria Ressa and Dmitry Muratov, published "A 10-Point Plan to Address Our Information Crisis" beginning with its demand to "Bring an end to the surveillance-for-profit business model." It observed that

"The vast machinery of corporate surveillance not only abuses our right to privacy, but allows our data to be used against us, undermining our freedoms and enabling discrimination."

In 2022, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission solicited public comment on the prospect of "Commercial Surveillance and Data Security Rulemaking."

In 2022, the California State legislature passed the Age Appropriate Design Code, developed and already successfully deployed in the UK–– another critical milestone.

These examples are but a few highlights among a range of significant legislative and regulatory initiatives in many governments, including in the U.S. Congress.

The International Observatory can make a unique contribution to this vital new wave, helping to lay the path from dystopia to democracy and reclaiming the void in the name of a democratic and digital future.

INTRODUCTION

By Angel Gurría, Co-chair of the prefiguration group of the Observatory

The current structure of the information and communication space and the failure of self-regulation has led to a crisis that is threatening democracy around the world. Democratic countries have often found themselves with no legal answers to address such threats.

States should shift from the current reactive response to a more proactive approach in the way they address these issues. The challenges posed by the information chaos are too significant for any one country to tackle them alone. Nations must defend democracy collectively, at the multilateral level.

International cooperation provides venues to exchange ideas, experiences, and best practices so that countries learn from each other and agree on common rules of the game. Uncoordinated national rules and policies will not be effective in achieving their goals.

Multilateralism needs two things: shared ideals and a shared understanding of reality. The Partnership for Information and Democracy, gathering 45 countries, has set the principles for the information and communication space.

The Observatory on Information and Democracy, of which the functions, governance and methodology are presented in this report, will provide these countries with a common understanding of the structure of the information and communication space and its impact on democracy.

By bringing together the research community, civil society, States, regulators, and representatives from private corporations, the Observatory aims to become the functional equivalent of the IPCC, in this case regarding the information and communication space. As a science/policy interface, the Observatory can facilitate a much-needed permanent process of interaction between knowledge producers and policymakers.

The road ahead for the creation of the Observatory calls for the support of all the members of the Partnership on Information and Democracy. The quality of our democracies depends on it. We must deliver.

INTRODUCTION

By Christophe Deloire, Chair of the Forum on Information and Democracy

THE FORUM ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY AN INSTITUTION OF OUR TIME

We feel the effects of climate change in our lives, even sometimes in our bodies. The consequences of the disruption of the Earth's ecosystem impacts our economies and potentially in the near future will impact our political systems. In the same way, effects of the information chaos weighs on our lives as individuals, societies, democracies and on international relations. Technologies bring benefits, but they also put systems in tension, out of balance, on the verge of tipping. In both cases, it is up to us to prevent a catastrophe from occurring.

Launched in 2018, the Initiative on Information and Democracy and its founding Commission has led the development of an international process to establish democratic guarantees in the global information and communication space. This process represents hope for the future of the digital ecosystem. Prior to the second Summit for Information and Democracy, which will be held in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly in September 2022, the Partnership for Information and Democracy has assembled 45 States from all continents. The Summits are consolidating as key opportunities to coordinate the creation of a democratic information and communication space.

This innovative experience of multilateralism of democracies, articulating the role of international organizations, States and Civil Society in an unprecedented scope, has led to the creation of an implementation entity, the Forum on Information and Democracy. Since its creation in Paris in 2019, it has launched working groups with international experts to stimulate the production of an appropriate regulatory framework. The working groups have been able to put forward hundreds of practical recommendations for regulation on How to end infodemics (2020) and in favor of *A New Deal for journalism (2021)*. Two new volumes have been announced, a third report on *Accountability regimes of social networks and their users* and a fourth one on *Pluralism in curation and indexation algorithms.*

A productive dialectic between international organizations, States, and civil society assumes that political leaders can anchor their decisions on shared findings, established on the keystone of a synthesis of academic research from all around the world. To finalize this international architecture, the Forum on Information and Democracy has decided to create, within its structure, the Observatory on Information and Democracy. With the mandate to assess the functioning of information and communication space, the Observatory will answer to the need of having a compass to guide evidence-based public action. This feasibility study designs its creation.

To create an "IPCC of communication and information" assumes to count on convinced, visionary, and engaged people. On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Forum on Information and Democracy and its staff, I am grateful to the co-chairs of the prefiguration group, Angel Gurría, former Secretary General of the OECD and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, and Shoshana Zuboff, Author of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* and Professor Emeritus, at Harvard University. Our appreciation goes to all the members of this working group, particularly to Maria Ressa, Journalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate 2021, who has been one of the main actors of this initiative since day one.

Assess, propose, gather. These three words define the three axes of our work. To move forward as fastly as necessary, we will need good will from all of those concerned.

THE PARTNERSHIP
FOR INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY

Providing democratic safeguards for the global communication and information space

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY

Composition:

States committing to implement democratic principles in the space of information and communication

Commission on Information and Democracy

Composition:
Nobel Prize laureates (peace, economics, literature), tech experts, journalists.

Mission:
- Published the International Declaration which defines the universal principles for Information and Democracy and inspires the Partnership

Annual Summits for Information and Democracy

Objectives:
- Strengthening international cooperation
- Working towards the implementation of the Forum's recommendations
- Promoting dialogue between governments and the civil society

EVALUATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

PUBLISHES an assessment report ahead of the Summits of the Partnership

EVALUATES the norms, structures and architectures of the information and communication space

IMPLEMENTING ENTITY

Forum on Information & Democracy

Founded by 11 organizations from civil society and academia

Missions:
- Evaluating the information and communication space
- Providing recommendations
- Support projects

DEVELOPS regulation frameworks addressed to signatory States

GATHERS contributions and recommendations from experts

HOSTS

GATHERS

MOBILIZES

International Observatory on Information and Democracy

Missions:
- Providing states and society as a whole with periodic evaluations of the information and communication space

International working group

Assignments:
- Gathering international contributions and expertises
- Suggesting recommendations to the states and stakeholders

Civil society organizations and academia

Missions:
- Contributing to develop recommendations and to the evaluation of the information space
- Promoting the implementation of democratic safeguards in this space

ABOUT **THE PREFIGURATION GROUP**

The prefiguration group was established by the Forum on Information and Democracy to define the objectives, methodology and resources of the Observatory.

CO-CHAIRS

- **Angel Gurría,** Former Secretary-General of the OECD
- **Shoshana Zuboff,** Professor Emeritus, Harvard Business School, author of *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*

MEMBERS

- **Virgilio Almeida,** Professor Emeritus, Department of Computer Science, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
- **Jim Balsillie,** Founder of the Center for International Governance Innovation
- **Jean-Marie Guéhenno,** Diplomat, former UN Deputy General Secretary
- **Miguel Poiares Maduro,** Chair, European Digital Media Observatory, European University Institute
- **Maria Ressa,** CEO, Rappler, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate 2021
- **Burhan Sönmez,** President, PEN International

RAPPORTEURS

- Lead rapporteur: **Florian Forestier**
- Rapporteurs: **Chloé Fiodiere, Yves Serra**

THE OBSERVATORY AT A GLANCE

1/ Vision, mission and principles
2/ Functions
3/ Ecosystem
4/ Governance
5/ Methodology
6/ Resources
7/ Timeline for its creation

1/ VISION, MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

Vision

As stated in the International Declaration on Information and Democracy, the global communication and information space is a common good of humankind and should be protected as such. Its management is the responsibility of humankind in its entirety, through democratic institutions, with the aim of facilitating real communication between individuals, culture, peoples and nations, in the service of human rights, civil concord, peace, life and the environment.

Mission

To evaluate the means, norms and architectures of the global information and communication space. The Observatory should provide decision-makers with a shared understanding of the challenges involved, so that they are encouraged to implement democratic principles and standards in this space at the international and national levels.

Principles

The Observatory carries over the key principles and values from the Declaration on Information and Democracy:

1. **The right to information**: the right to seek, receive and access reliable information. Information can only be regarded as reliable when freely gathered, processed and disseminated according to the principles of commitment to truth, plurality of viewpoints, and rational methods of establishment and verification of facts. Reliable information underpins the exercise of freedom of opinion, respect for other human rights, and all democratic practices.

2. **Freedom of expression**: the right of individuals to express themselves freely, including the right to criticize any system of thought, cannot be constrained or limited. In particular, intellectual property should not create closed systems and should not be used to restrict public deliberation.

3. **Privacy**: participants in the public debate must be able to protect the confidentiality of their private information or communications.

4. **Responsibility**: all participants in the public debate are responsible for what they express, including content they disseminate or help to disseminate. This responsibility implies transparency over their identity.

5. **Transparency of powers**: every public or private sector entity imbued with a form of power or influence has – within the limits of the public interest – transparency obligations in proportion to the power or influence it is able to exercise over people or ideas. This transparency must be assured in a swift, sincere and systematic manner.

2/ FUNCTIONS

OBSERVATORY ON INFORMATION & DEMOCRACY

The IPCC of information and communication

The Observatory provides states and society as a whole with periodic evaluations of the information and communication space

1. A SCIENCE/POLICY INTERFACE

- → Creating a permanent process of interaction between knowledge producers and policymakers through a methodology that ensures that the information produced is relevant to decision-makers at the right scale and time.
- → Answering policymakers' needs by both defining the issues to be studied by the Observatory's researchers and including these scientific topics in a legislative and political context.

2. A RESEARCH SYNTHESIS PRODUCER

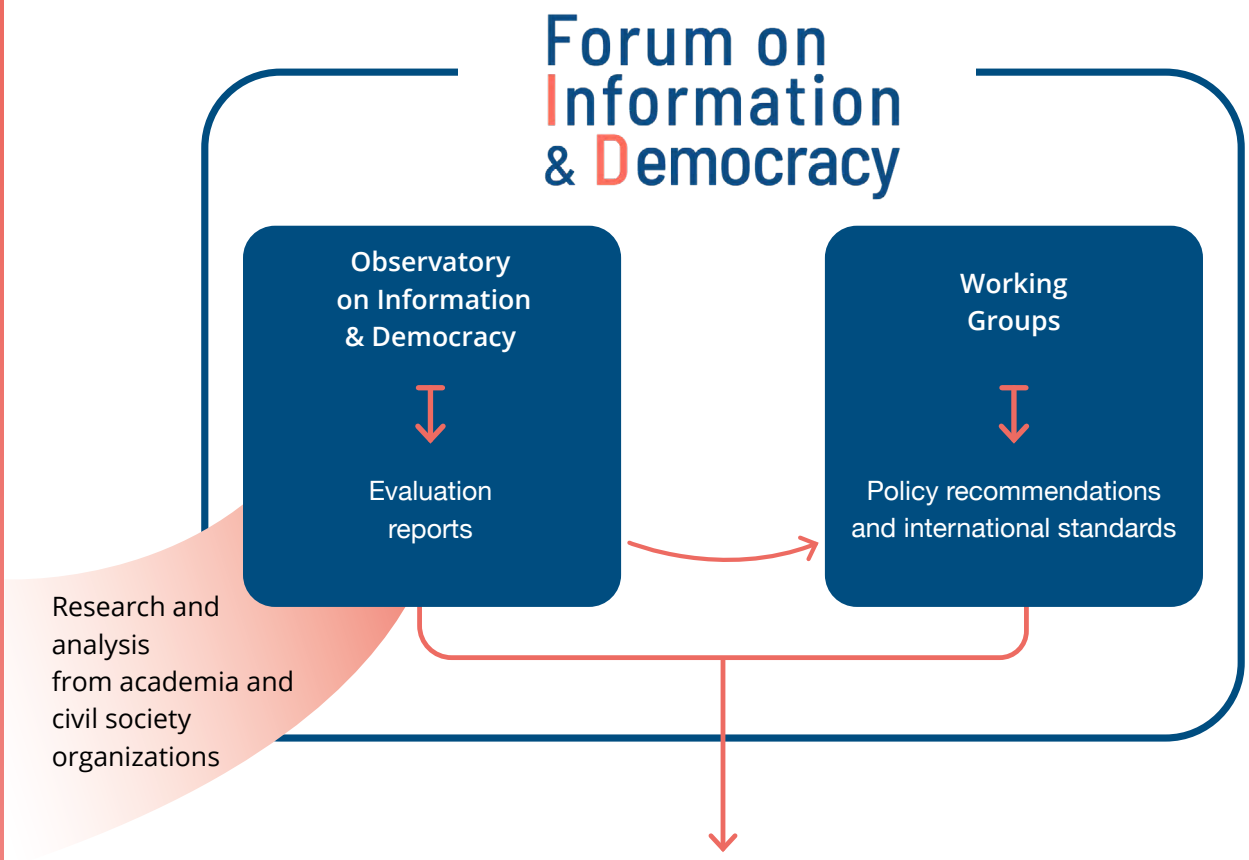
- → Producing a periodic report evaluating the means, standards and architectures of the information and communication space.
- → Writing reports based on a meta-analysis of the information space and an aggregation and synthesis of all available research and data, which can be cross-referenced with data on democratic evolutions.

3. A RATING AGENCY

- → The agency would analyze tech corporations' algorithms and their compliance with democratic principles, and could produce a barometer for policymakers.
- → The means and access to data are not yet sufficient to realize this mission, and the agency will be launched by the Observatory when all necessary conditions are met.

3/ ECOSYSTEM

According to its mandate, the Forum will evaluate the information space through the Observatory. In parallel to this, the Forum will continue providing policy recommendations and international standards to the signatory states of the Partnership for Information and Democracy. To date, the Forum has published two reports: H*ow to End Infodemics* (2020) and *A New Deal for Journalism* (2021). The evaluations conducted by the Observatory will serve as evidence for the Forum's policy recommendations, and legitimize the need to implement them.



Signatory States of the Partnership for I&D

As an evaluation of the digital space, the reports will be a legitimizing factor in measures taken

International Organizations

The reports will provide foundations for discussions and implementation of joint actions

Scientific Community

The Observatory's analyses will stimulate research, feed existing studies and encourage international cooperation

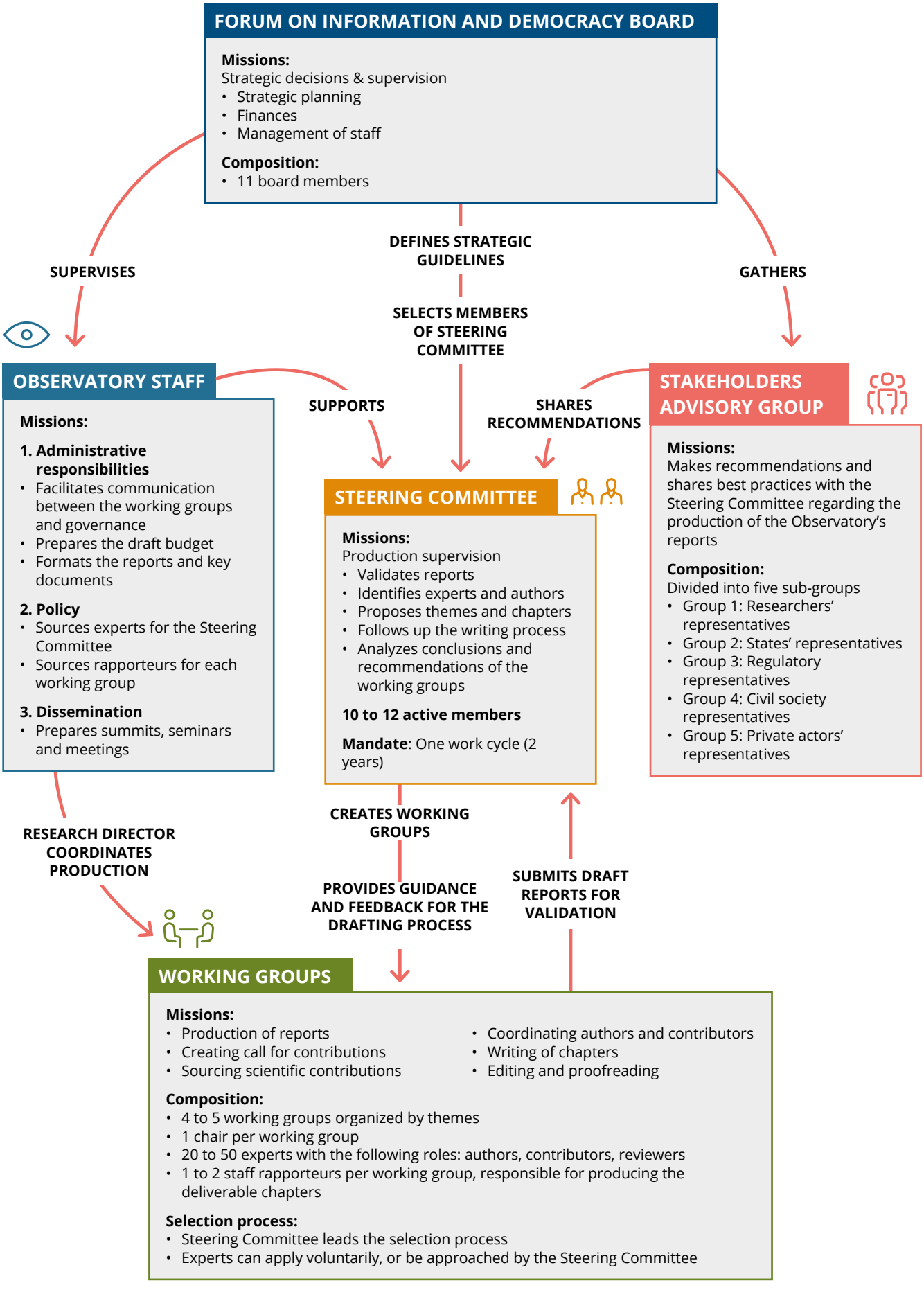
Civil Society Organizations

The information aggregated will strengthen the advocacy of civil society organizations and empower citizens to make informed choices

ANNUAL SUMMITS FOR INFORMATION & DEMOCRACY

The summits gather signatory states and relevant stakeholders to discuss the conclusions of the Observatory and take action

4/ GOVERNANCE



5/ METHODOLOGY

Stakeholders Advisory Group

→ **Recommends themes for the report**

Steering Committee

→ **Selects the theme for the report**
→ **Defines the main questions to be answered**
→ **Determines criteria for selection of authors**
→ **Sources and selects authors**
→ **Proposes chapter divisions**
→ **Validates acceptability of sources**
→ **Approves & disseminates call for contributions**

Working Groups

→ **Drafts the call for contributions**
→ **Collection of material**
- Research articles on academic databases
- Collect material from the contributions received

→ **Drafting**
- Synthesize the data collected
- Draft sections answering specific questions

→ **Chapter cohesion**
- Working group coordinators each ensure the assembly of sections to create coherent chapters

→ **First revision cycle**
- Sections and chapters are each reviewed by the editors/reviewers and the Steering Committee

→ **Drafting of second version**
- Incorporation of review comments

→ **Second revision cycle**
- Section and chapters are each reviewed by external actors: states, individual experts, scientific panels and the Steering Committee

→ **Drafting of final version**
- Incorporation of second review comments

Staff

→ **Formats final version**

Steering Committee

→ **Validates final report**

6/ RESOURCES

BUDGET

Types of resources

- Funding
- Human & material assistance (offices, wages, experts' contributions, etc.)
- Hosting of seminars and assemblies

Types of costs

Permanent team

- Permanent team wages
- Permanent team office wages

Events

- Working groups meetings & seminars
- Stakeholders' assemblies
- Travel of experts from developing countries

Reports

- Production of reports
  - Translation
  - Design & printing
  - Distribution

FUNDING SOURCES

- Voluntary contributions from states
- Support from international organizations
- Grants from private foundations
- Substantial crowdfunding

Budget forecasts determine the necessary fundraising

Contributions meet the annual budgets to support meetings, and the permanent staff.

Contribution pledges are communicated to the permanent staff to prepare the budget forecasts

Administration rules regulate the adoption and expenditure of the budget

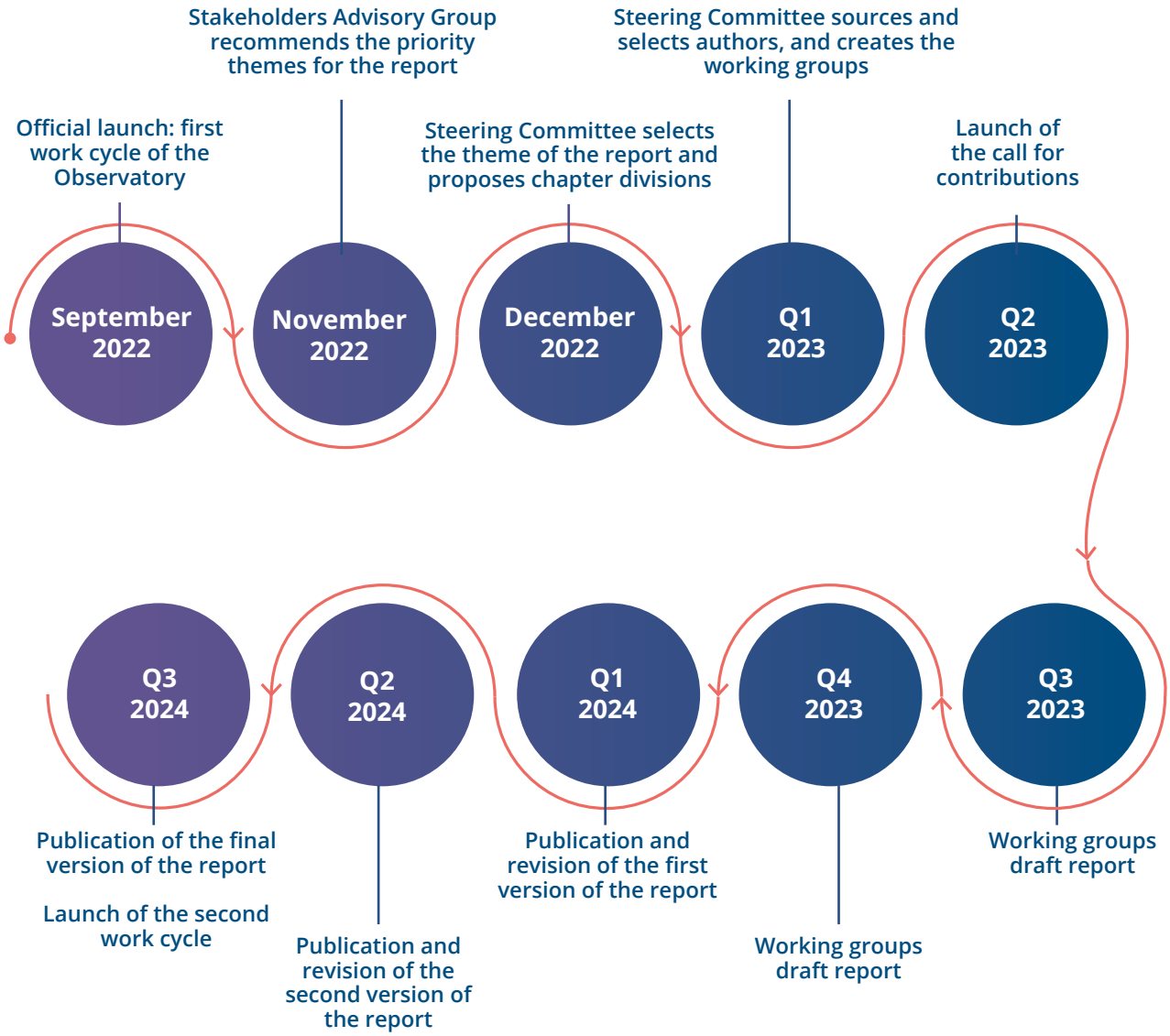
BUDGET ADMINISTRATION RULES

1. Budget forecasts are prepared by the Secretariat according to the pledges from funding sources
2. Budget forecasts adopted by consensus by the Board of Directors of the Forum
3. International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) as expenditure regulation standards
4. Set up a working capital reserve Target: 10% of annual budget

7/ FIRST WORK CYCLE

PROPOSAL

First Work Cycle 2022 - 2024



PREFIGURATION BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND **OF THE OBSERVATORY**

The Observatory is a project of the Forum on Information and Democracy, the implementing entity of the International Partnership for Information and Democracy endorsed by 45 countries.

Main priorities of the Forum on Information and Democracy

1/ Build an international governance architecture: Partnership for Information and Democracy

- Promote the standardization of regulations and exchange of good practices between signatory states of the Partnership, and where applicable the endorsement of private entities (digital corporations).
- Promote coordination among governments through annual summits and high-level meetings.

2/ Provide international standards through working groups

- Define and launch working groups that are innovative, able to address urgent issues, and have strong political traction to provide democratic countries with policy recommendations and international standards for the regulation of the information and communication space.

3/ Provide a common understanding of the information and communication space: Observatory on Information and Democracy

- Regularly evaluate the state of the space for information and communication, particularly with regard to the principles of the Partnership for Information and Democracy.
- The Observatory will run meta-evaluations (syntheses of existing evaluations) to be published prior to each summit of the Initiative on Information and Democracy.

4/ Strengthen international civil society mobilization

- Build coordinated international action to pressure corporations to implement democratic safeguards through the Civil Society Coalition on Information and Democracy.
- Mobilize civil society organizations to advocate to ensure that States are committed to the Partnership for Information and Democracy.

Theory of change of the Initiative on Information and Democracy

If we:

> **Gather a coalition of democracies committed to a set of democratic principles for the information and communication space (the Partnership), and develop a civil-society-led implementation body (the Forum) to:**

- Provide these democracies with a shared understanding of the challenges of the global information and communication space (the Observatory);
- Mobilize civil society organizations (the civil society coalition);
- Push for the implementation of democratic principles through the development of global standards for regulation and self-regulation (the policy work of the working groups),

We will manage to bring about policy changes that will serve to:

> **Counterbalance the power of private companies in the structuring of the information and communication space (for example, through requirements on transparency, accountability, neutrality, and the promotion of reliable information);**

> **Counterbalance the comparative advantage of authoritarian regimes, who are benefiting from open digital spaces in democracies while closing their own;**

> **Ensure that the structuring of the public debate works for democracy, individual freedoms, and human rights through adapted legal frameworks that address the technological evolutions of this space and the utilization of these developments (content moderation, recommendation systems and content ranking, ad targeting, deep fakes, inauthentic coordinated behavior, etc.);**

> **Secure a democratic information space jointly governed by democratic institutions according to democratic principles and organized internally by democratic decisions rather than by the interests of private companies.**

CHAPTER 1/ **FUNCTIONS**

The Observatory's Functions at a Glance

The Observatory will play an essential role in informing the debates and decisions of states and regulators, feeding research by the scientific community, and in providing key elements to the general public to understand the challenges that are an inevitable part of internet usage.

To achieve its missions, the Observatory will aim at ensuring three different functions. Some of these functions, as noted below, will take more time to implement:

The three functions of the Observatory:

- **A science/policy interface,** establishing a permanent process of interaction between knowledge producers and policymakers.
- **A research synthesis producer,** producing a periodic report evaluating the means, standards and architectures of the information and communication space.
- **A rating agency,** scoring tech corporations to ensure accountability. The lack of access to data from tech corporations and inherent research does not allow the Observatory to ensure this function in the short term. As access to data progresses and the research community is empowered, the Observatory will be able to launch this function in coming years.

1.1/ **SCIENCE/POLICY INTERFACE**

The first need for the Observatory to address is to provide policymakers and regulators with a synthesis of the international scientific community's productions, in order to inform discussions and decision-making.

It is necessary to ensure the relevance of reports produced for decision-makers to guarantee the Observatory's legitimacy in the long run: the way it answers these questions will affect the impact of its work. The "science/policy interface"[1] is not a simple process of transferring knowledge from researchers to political decision-makers, it represents permanent exchanges of interaction between knowledge producers and public-policy actors, defined by an established working method, a shared vocabulary, and common objectives.

The definition of the questions to be answered by the Observatory, and their inclusion in a legislative and political context, is crucial to its success. However, the issues the Observatory will deal with are closely integrated in different scopes of government. It is necessary to closely involve decision-makers and regulators in the work, and it is as important to avoid political interference and influence.

To carry out this mission, the Observatory will receive requests and proposals from all relevant stakeholders (states, intergovernmental organizations, scientific organizations, non-governmental organizations, and representatives from private actors) regarding themes considered important for the implementation of a specific regulation, or to feed the political debate. The Observatory will analyze and address these questions in the material it produces. Certain topics that arise from requests could be dealt with in a biennial report, or even be the subject of a specific report.

1 Denis Pesche, "Analyzing the influence of global environmental assessments" (2010), in Mitchell, Ronald B., and William C. Clark, David W. Cash, Nancy M. Dickson, *Global Environmental Assessments: Information and Influence,* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MI

The collaboration of public authorities and regulators will enable the Observatory, in the long run, to synthesize feedback on the different forms of regulation that have been attempted.

1.2/ RESEARCH SYNTHESIS PRODUCER

Prefiguration work showed that the field of research devoted to the development of tech corporations and their impact on democracy[2] is booming. Public and private funding available to support this field is considerable.[3] A number of researchers are specializing in these issues; others are joining them, sometimes as an opportunity to acquire funding. This fragmented and multidisciplinary research field is driven by both governments and NGOs, or tech corporations themselves. The research is abundant, and evolves as rapidly as the issues do.

It is therefore important for the international community to have a synthesis of the main results of this research: of the main areas of discussion, as well as the main obstacles encountered, to create solid and consensual results. The creation of the Observatory aims to respond to these difficulties by drafting biennial reports comprising:

- A global state-of-the-art assessment of research publications;
- A definition of gaps and obstacles encountered by researchers.

The reports will stimulate new research and new cooperation between countries and research institutions, and across disciplines, to reach a better understanding of the issues involved.

From the insights gained during the prefiguration phase, it is clear that the Observatory's methodology will ensure its legitimacy in the eyes of the scientific community, and encourage the involvement of many researchers in the process. (In the case of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC],4 thousands of researchers are involved on a voluntary basis, as this participation is valued within their community and the links with the political world give them an impact.)

The initial selection of experts to launch the Observatory will have a major impact on future actors joining the initiative. Finally, the definition of the work areas for the first reports will be crucial in supporting this growth dynamic. The challenge is to determine research areas likely to gather researchers from various disciplines and fields, sometimes with antagonistic positions.

Major research themes:

Creating an exhaustive inventory of the disciplines, approaches, and methods used in this research field is difficult to achieve, as the field is fragmented and the issues evolve very quickly. The major themes identified during the prefiguration work center on **humanities and social sciences,** with many sociological or political works studying the strategies of economic, political, and militant actors; governance (national and international) of the digital world; the processes of news creation, and politicization on social media.

More general perspectives, such as the study of disinformation or polarization issues, and the different conceptions of public space in the digital age are also represented. Research is also being developed in the field of **psychology and cognitive sciences,** in particular to analyze the impact of the development of social networks on behavior. **Law and economics** constitute another pole of research, focusing on the analysis of economic models; the examination of the market power of tech corporations; the study of practices considered fraudulent, and the definition of new rights for the digital age.

2 Definition: democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised. People have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers to account. Women and men have equal rights and all people are free from discrimination (United Nations).

3 There is a potential funding bias in the field of research devoted to the development of tech corporations and their impact on democracy. Funding bias leads to:
- over-representation of problems faced by rich countries, especially the US;
- over-representation of negative problems; few studies on positive effects.

4 IPCC FACTSHEET *What is the IPCC?* (2021) https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/07/AR6_FS_What_is_IPCC.pdf

The exact sciences are not to be outdone and constitute important fields of research, notably the study of **algorithms, data sciences,** and the analysis of **human-computer interactions.** Disciplines such as signal processing and computational linguistics are also key topics. Digital security and the examination of privacy issues or cyber threats are further important research fields.

In addition to this "targeted" research, more general and **systematic researches** aim to characterize digital transformations of societies, interactions, and capitalism as a whole.

These different types of research develop and use numerous methods (detailed in Appendix 1), including visualizations, research on correlations and causalities between digital media, and the evolution of different types of variables, tests, experiments, and simulations.[5]

The Observatory's work involves highly fragmented disciplines.[6] Mobilization of academic communities is therefore a challenge in itself. In order to meet this challenge, it is necessary to propose functions beneficial to the scientific community and likely to gain a high level of support, such as:

→ A process aiming at transparency in data access, responding to the needs of researchers and regulators

Most data needed by researchers is controlled by tech companies (Appendix 2). The challenge is not only to synthesize research results; it is to allow researchers to gain access to qualitative data and ensure its relevance. This can be achieved by:

- An inventory of the gaps and asymmetries in access to information
- An inventory of researchers' and governments' access to tech corporations' data (e.g., number of requests made, number of results obtained, how long requests for data access take.)
- An estimation per tech corporation of access to data
- An assessment of the means to verify the quality of the data transmitted

→ Research mapping including:

- A mapping of scientific publications
- A state of the gaps and shortcomings of research
- Thematic visualizations according to different criteria established with a Gargantext-type tool[7]
- Research dissension mapping (e.g., by mapping legal definitions of misinformation, online hate)

→ A center for resources and exchanges

The need for a center of resources was frequently highlighted during the prefiguration process. The role of such a center will be to create a website centralizing research publications, updated on a very regular basis, to help researchers in their work and to unite a community of research actors.

The topics related to the governance of the digital space evolve very quickly and require high-quality information that is regularly updated. The center will participate in giving life to the Observatory's network and serve as a space for researchers to identify themselves, to identify possible research topics, and to create links with other actors such as NGOs.

Although the center for resources was recommended by many experts during the prefiguration phase, it is a project that would take time and need to be built over a number of years. The allocation of resources needed to build such a resource center will not be the priority during the first work cycle of the Observatory, which has initially to be set up, and to publish its first report. The creation of the resource center is projected for the second or the third work cycle, once the Observatory is fully functional.

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5 An inventory of these methods is given in Appendix 1, which complements recent comprehensive reviews by UNESCO (Alava et al., 2017) and GIFCT (GIFCT, 2021).

6 The Observatory's work involves highly fragmented disciplines as there is a great diversity of disciplines and paradigms; culturally, Humanities and Social Sciences are reluctant to participate in regulation; disciplinary approach and the angle of definition chosen for an issue can lead to radically different conclusions and recommendations for regulation (e.g., in the field of addiction)

7 Gargantext,https://gargantext.org/ & CNRS, Institut des Systèmes Complexes, https://iscpif.fr/projects/gargantext/

1.3/ **RATING AGENCY**

The evaluation report will give a general overview of the state of the information and communication space. Prefiguration research has shown that in order to enhance accountability and raise awareness, rating each platform on its impact on democracy could be a complementary tool for the Observatory.

Building a rating agency will require elements that are not yet available: algorithmic transparency and clear explanations regarding the data used by the algorithm; access to data from tech corporations; provisions in trade agreements for intellectual property; capability to obtain a substantial quantity of data and the auditing capacity to analyze it.

At this stage, building this rating agency is an ambition of the Observatory and will be launched when all conditions are met.

The mandate of the rating agency could be to produce:

1. An individual score for each tech corporation analyzing the impacts of algorithms and their compliance with democratic principles. It would assess tech corporations' algorithms scientifically and objectively, to provide these measurements to decision-makers and regulators. Individual ratings of each corporation (Western and non-Western) would make them more accountable and help raise citizen awareness as to challenges inherent in using the internet.
2. A global score for policymakers to help them assess the situation in the information and communication space, so as to be able to take actions and evaluate the impact of these actions. Several criteria could be scored by local experts in each of the signatory countries of the Partnership for Information and Democracy. A dedicated team within the Observatory's permanent staff would be charged with collecting and consolidating local feedback.

To carry out this mandate, the Observatory will have to define specific criteria and gain access to the necessary data.

Given the complexity of developing and defining these criteria, the Observatory will launch a consultative process directed towards different categories of stakeholders (including representatives from governments, regulatory bodies, civil society and academia).

The creation of these criteria could take place in five key steps, with this potential timeline:

1. Q1 2023: meeting of the Steering Committee to define the borders of the assessment.
2. Q2 2023: meeting of the Steering Committee to determine the categories of criteria that will be analyzed.
3. Q2 2023: consultation with the Stakeholders Advisory Group of the Observatory to select the criteria for each category of assessment.
4. Q4 2023/Q1 2024: first test of the yearly analysis of the criteria.
5. Q3/Q4 2024: second test of the yearly analysis of the criteria.

The criteria could be revised by the Steering Committee according to the efficiency of the first assessments planned in 2023 and 2024.

At this point in time, the means and access to data are not sufficient to realize this mission. It is nevertheless important to highlight the necessity of this tool to ensure accountability of tech corporations. With the evolution of regulation, there is the expectation that access to data will allow this rating agency to be set up by the Observatory in the near future.

CHAPTER 2/ **GOVERNANCE**

Governance at a Glance

The Observatory's system of governance will be composed of four entities and a support team:

- **The Board of Directors of the Forum on Information and Democracy**[8] will oversee strategic decisions (such as financial matters, strategic planning) and manage the permanent team.
- **The Stakeholders Advisory Group** will be responsible for preparing recommendations to the Steering Committee regarding themes of the reports. It will be divided into five sub-groups representing different categories of stakeholders: actors from the scientific community, states' representatives, representatives of regulators, actors from civil society, and representatives from private actors.
- **The Steering Committee** will supervise the production of reports. This includes: identifying and selecting experts and authors; determining the scope and structure of reports; monitoring the drafting process; proofreading and validation of the working groups' analyses; and the validation of the final reports. The members of the Steering Committee will be appointed by the Forum's Board of Directors.
- **Four to five working groups** will be in charge of sourcing and selecting academic resources through calls for contributions; ensuring a scientific review; and writing each chapter by synthesizing the knowledge gathered. Each group will be coordinated by a chairperson and be composed of 20 to 50 experts and authors, including the following roles: contributors, editors, coordinators and reviewers. Each working group will be supported by a rapporteur, responsible for producing the final deliverable report; rapporteurs will be coordinated by the scientific director of the Observatory. Each working group should produce at least one chapter of the reports.
- **The permanent staff** of the Observatory will be responsible for administrative tasks, acting as a support for the identification of experts and rapporteurs of the working groups, coordinating the rapporteurs' work, and taking charge of organizing events and meetings for the dissemination of the Observatory's work.

2.1/ **FOUNDATIONS OF LEGITIMACY**

The definition of governance is crucial for the Observatory, perhaps even more so than for other institutions. As the Observatory's main function is to establish a justified state of knowledge, the question of who decides, and how, which knowledge is selected and how it is justified, will be examined by all stakeholders and will ensure the legitimacy of the analyses.

The challenge is to build a system of governance that becomes a source of legitimacy and transparency, involving scientists, decision-makers, and civil society around the common need for the "right" regulation. The Observatory's answer to this challenge is to create a hybrid space where researchers and decision-makers interact to assess the knowledge needed to frame standards and nourish public action. The success of a global evaluation mechanism is not limited to the criterion of scientific credibility, but also

8 Forum on Information and Democracy, Board of Directors https://informationdemocracy.org/forum/

depends on:

- The relevance of the questions formulated at the outset and the knowledge selected;
- Their legitimacy (which is partly linked to the diversity of actors involved in the process).

Decision-makers will be able to ask questions that interest them to launch public actions and regulations, but the answers provided by the Observatory should not be biased by any political considerations.

This requirement is high.[9] The entanglement of politics and information is such that any analysis will be viewed as potentially partisan. The structure of the Observatory's governance will have to prove that this is not the case. This structure will involve:

- Independent actors from diverse disciplines, geographic locations, epistemic approaches, commitments and interests;
- Clear and transparent financing methods;
- Productions that can be reviewed at each stage of the work cycle;
- The constitution of an "epistemic community" (definition from Peter Haas[10]) allowing the circulation of ideas between the scientific, political and administrative spheres.

2.2/ **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE SELECTED**

Based on lessons learned during the prefiguration process, interviews conducted, and examples from similar initiatives, four governance structures were identified, analyzed, and are outlined below.

The governance structure presented in this section has been selected for four main reasons:

- It represents all stakeholders' voices, as it includes a stakeholders' advisory group;
- It offers political resonance, while avoiding conflict of interests with states;
- It positions the parent organization of the Observatory, the Forum on Information and Democracy, as the strategic decision-maker;
- It is easily implementable in the short-term and adaptable to the future growth of the Observatory in the long run.

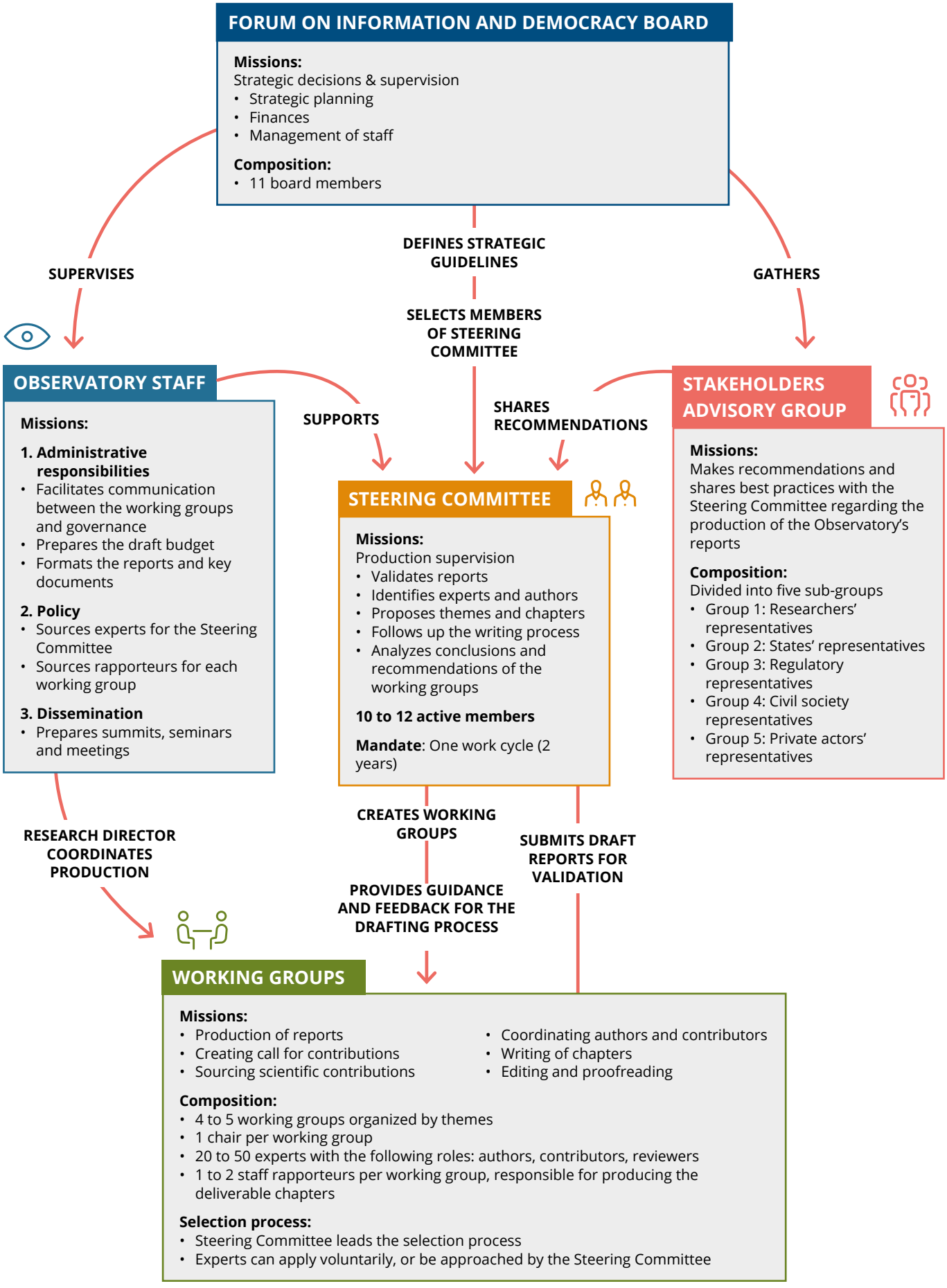
The governance involves the five entities detailed below. The Observatory will also have the possibility to rely on a network of partners to develop its capacities.

In the interests of transparency, the three other governance options that were considered are presented in Section 2.3. These options were rejected as a result of insights gained during the prefiguration process.

9 Jasanoff, S. (2004). "The Idiom of Co-Production", in S. Jasanoff (ed.) *States of Knowledge. The Co-Production of Science and Social Order.* London/ Routledge: Routledge, pp. 1-12 ; Jasanoff, S. (2005.) *Designs on Nature. Science and Democracy in Europe and the United States*,. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press

10 Haas, Peter M. (1992). "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination". *International Organization*, 46:1-35.

2.2


FORUM ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY BOARD
Missions:
Strategic decisions & supervision
• Strategic planning
• Finances
• Management of staff
Composition:
• 11 board members
SUPERVISES
DEFINES STRATEGIC GUIDELINES
SELECTS MEMBERS OF STEERING COMMITTEE
GATHERS
OBSERVATORY STAFF
Missions:
1. Administrative responsibilities
• Facilitates communication between the working groups and governance
• Prepares the draft budget
• Formats the reports and key documents
2. Policy
• Sources experts for the Steering Committee
• Sources rapporteurs for each working group
3. Dissemination
• Prepares summits, seminars and meetings
SUPPORTS
SHARES RECOMMENDATIONS
STEERING COMMITTEE
Missions:
Production supervision
• Validates reports
• Identifies experts and authors
• Proposes themes and chapters
• Follows up the writing process
• Analyzes conclusions and recommendations of the working groups
10 to 12 active members
Mandate: One work cycle (2 years)
STAKEHOLDERS ADVISORY GROUP
Missions:
Makes recommendations and shares best practices with the Steering Committee regarding the production of the Observatory's reports
Composition:
Divided into five sub-groups
• Group 1: Researchers' representatives
• Group 2: States' representatives
• Group 3: Regulatory representatives
• Group 4: Civil society representatives
• Group 5: Private actors' representatives
RESEARCH DIRECTOR COORDINATES PRODUCTION
CREATES WORKING GROUPS
SUBMITS DRAFT REPORTS FOR VALIDATION
PROVIDES GUIDANCE AND FEEDBACK FOR THE DRAFTING PROCESS
WORKING GROUPS
Missions:
• Production of reports
• Creating call for contributions
• Sourcing scientific contributions
• Coordinating authors and contributors
• Writing of chapters
• Editing and proofreading
Composition:
• 4 to 5 working groups organized by themes
• 1 chair per working group
• 20 to 50 experts with the following roles: authors, contributors, reviewers
• 1 to 2 staff rapporteurs per working group, responsible for producing the deliverable chapters
Selection process:
• Steering Committee leads the selection process
• Experts can apply voluntarily, or be approached by the Steering Committee

2.2.1/ The decision-making body

The Board of Directors of the Forum on Information and Democracy will oversee strategic decisions, such as financial matters and strategic planning. It will nominate the Steering Committee and manage the permanent staff of the Observatory.

Beyond its role for the Observatory, the Board of Directors determines the strategy of the Forum on Information and Democracy. It establishes the objectives, deliverable research and reports, resources and governance of the different working groups. It is composed of 11 members[11] representing civil society organizations from nine countries. The members of the Board of Directors are elected by the General Assembly of the Forum and do not receive any financial remuneration for this work.

2.2.2/ The advisory entity

The Stakeholders Advisory Group will recommend priority themes and best practices for the reports to the Steering Committee. It will be divided into five sub-groups representing the stakeholders: actors from the scientific community, states' representatives, representatives of regulators, civil society, and private actors' representatives.

2.2.3/ The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will supervise the production of reports. This mission includes: identifying and selecting experts and authors; defining chapters for each report; monitoring the drafting process; proofreading and validation of the working groups' analyses; and the validation of the final reports. The Steering Committee's members will be appointed by the Forum's Board of Directors.

2.2.4/ The working groups

Depending on the theme of each report, four to five working groups could be assembled. They would be responsible for sourcing and selecting academic resources through calls for contributions; ensuring a scientific review; and writing each chapter by synthesizing the knowledge gathered. Each group would be coordinated by a chairperson and composed of 20 to 50 experts and authors, including the following roles: contributors, editors, coordinators and reviewers. Each working group will be supported by a rapporteur, responsible for producing the final deliverable report. Rapporteurs will be coordinated by the scientific director of the Observatory. Each working group should produce at least one chapter of each final report.

2.2.5/ The permanent team

Insights gained during the prefiguration phase indicated that the Observatory's functions require the setting up of an operational team to:

- Organize meetings and seminars;
- Provide administrative support (preparation of documents and reports to be submitted to the governance bodies);
- Facilitate communication between working groups and the governance bodies;
- Prepare the Observatory's draft budget;
- Assist in mobilizing financial resources;
- Assist with outreach activities and the production of communication materials (including the Observatory's website);
- Disseminate the reports.

11 Forum on Information and Democracy, Board of Directors https://informationdemocracy.org/forum/

The permanent team would have an administrative function, but would not have any influence on the work of the Observatory or its governance.

Two options have been shortlisted to set up the permanent team and ensure these missions:

Option 1: The Forum hosts the permanent staff

The Forum is the parent organization of the Observatory and has played a de facto secretarial role during the prefiguration phase. The sourcing and recruitment of the permanent team would come naturally into the Forum's scope. As the Observatory comes under the Forum's auspices, it would make sense for the Forum's Board to oversee the permanent staff in order to achieve a unified leadership.

Option 2: The Forum and the OECD engage in an institutionalized partnership

Through this option, the OECD would perform the functions of the secretariat. While the decision of a partnership would need to be made by the 38 OECD Members, and the exact format of this partnership would also need to be defined with OECD Members, an institutionalized partnership between the Forum and the OECD on the secretariat would have the advantage of reinforcing the integration of the Observatory in international governance, providing an effective political relay particularly to states that are not part of the Partnership for Information and Democracy. It would also enable strong synergies between the Observatory's working groups and the international policy-making leadership of the OECD.

In order to keep the working processes of the Observatory up to date and constantly improved, evaluation sessions and revisions are necessary. These sessions would be held during the work cycles or at the end of each cycle. Their objectives would be to assess the strengths of the current procedures and propose recommendations and action plans for their improvement. The evaluation cycles are detailed in Appendix 3.

2.3/ OTHER GOVERNANCE SCENARIOS ANALYZED

The prefiguration working group studied existing initiatives and conducted interviews to find the most appropriate governance option for the Observatory. This section presents the options that were not retained as possible systems of governance. The objective is to be transparent in describing shortlisted options and why they have been rejected.

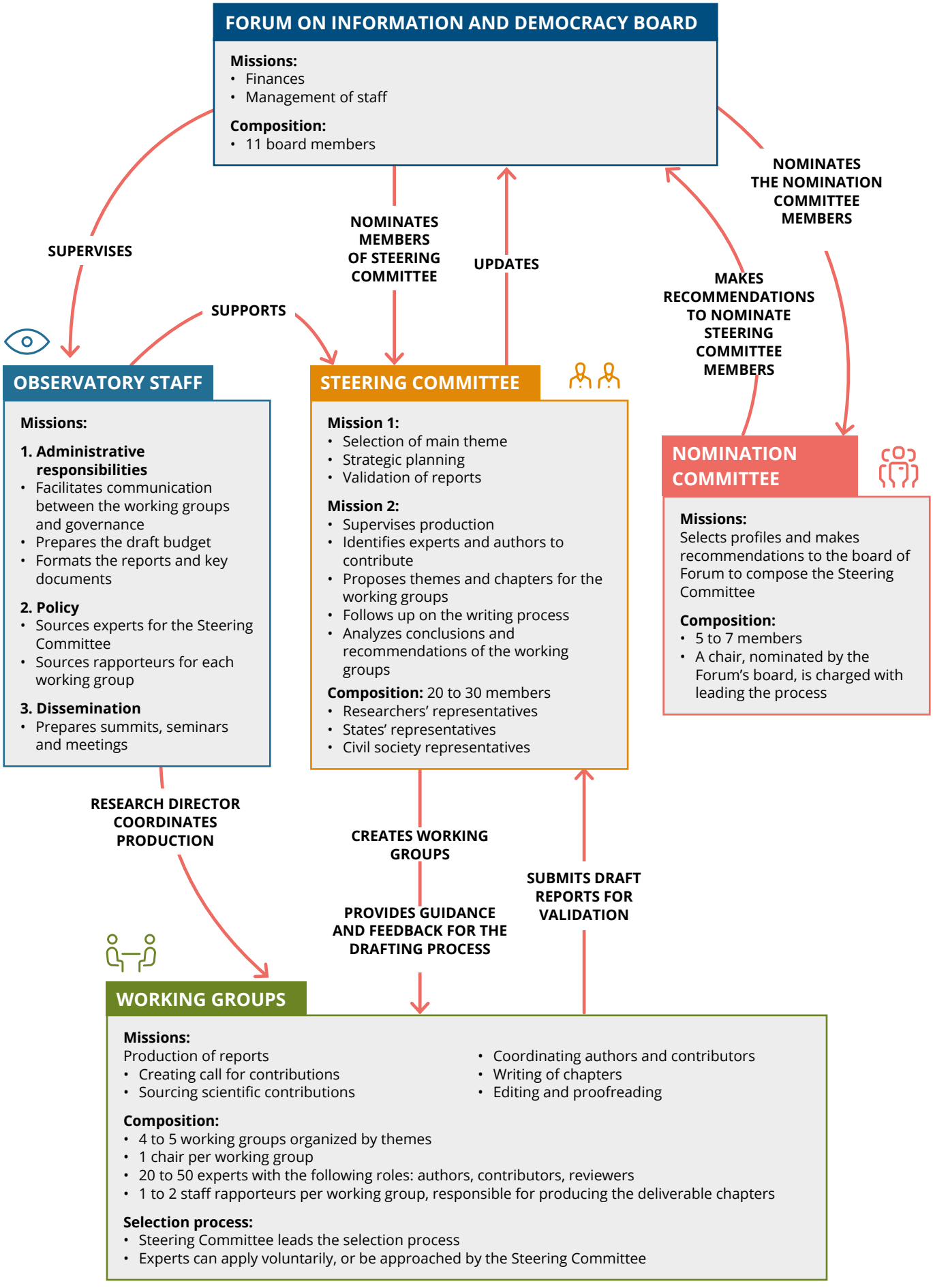
2.3.1/ An expanded Steering Committee as strategic decision body

This scenario, based on an enlarged Steering Committee, was not selected as it would have lacked high-level political representation and resonance.

2.3.2/ Working groups in charge of strategic decisions

This scenario, based on an assembly composed of the working groups' members, was not selected as an appropriate governance system. The skills of working group experts are not necessarily those relevant to strategic decisions such as budget validation or strategic planning. The size of a strategic decision body made up in this way (with up to 50 experts) could hinder efficiency. Furthermore, such an assembly would have lacked high-level political representation and resonance.

2.3.1


FORUM ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY BOARD
Missions:
• Finances
• Management of staff
Composition:
• 11 board members
SUPERVISES
NOMINATES MEMBERS OF STEERING COMMITTEE
UPDATES
NOMINATES THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS
MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS TO NOMINATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS
SUPPORTS
OBSERVATORY STAFF
Missions:
1. Administrative responsibilities
• Facilitates communication between the working groups and governance
• Prepares the draft budget
• Formats the reports and key documents
2. Policy
• Sources experts for the Steering Committee
• Sources rapporteurs for each working group
3. Dissemination
• Prepares summits, seminars and meetings
STEERING COMMITTEE
Mission 1:
• Selection of main theme
• Strategic planning
• Validation of reports
Mission 2:
• Supervises production
• Identifies experts and authors to contribute
• Proposes themes and chapters for the working groups
• Follows up on the writing process
• Analyzes conclusions and recommendations of the working groups
Composition: 20 to 30 members
• Researchers' representatives
• States' representatives
• Civil society representatives
NOMINATION COMMITTEE
Missions:
Selects profiles and makes recommendations to the board of Forum to compose the Steering Committee
Composition:
• 5 to 7 members
• A chair, nominated by the Forum's board, is charged with leading the process
RESEARCH DIRECTOR COORDINATES PRODUCTION
CREATES WORKING GROUPS
PROVIDES GUIDANCE AND FEEDBACK FOR THE DRAFTING PROCESS
SUBMITS DRAFT REPORTS FOR VALIDATION
WORKING GROUPS
Missions:
Production of reports
• Creating call for contributions
• Sourcing scientific contributions
• Coordinating authors and contributors
• Writing of chapters
• Editing and proofreading
Composition:
• 4 to 5 working groups organized by themes
• 1 chair per working group
• 20 to 50 experts with the following roles: authors, contributors, reviewers
• 1 to 2 staff rapporteurs per working group, responsible for producing the deliverable chapters
Selection process:
• Steering Committee leads the selection process
• Experts can apply voluntarily, or be approached by the Steering Committee

2.3.2

FORUM ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY BOARD

Missions:
- Staff management & recruitment

Composition:
- 11 board members

SUPERVISES

STAKEHOLDERS ASSEMBLY

Missions:
Strategic decisions & political supervision
- Selects main theme for the report
- Strategic planning
- Validates budget
- Validates reports

Composition:
- All working group experts (20 to 50)
- A chair is elected by the assembly and represents the assembly in the Steering Committee

DEFINES STRATEGIC GUIDELINES

NOMINATES STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SUPPORTS

OBSERVATORY STAFF

Missions:

1. Administrative responsibilities
- Facilitates communication between the working groups and governance
- Prepares the draft budget
- Formats the reports and key documents

2. Policy
- Sources experts for the Steering Committee
- Sources rapporteurs for each working group

3. Dissemination
- Prepares summits, seminars and meetings

STEERING COMMITTEE

Missions:
Production supervision
- Identifies experts and authors to contribute
- Proposes themes and chapters for the working groups
- Follows up on the writing process
- Analyzes the working groups' conclusions and recommendations

Composition:
A Steering Committee & independent scientific experts
- Steering Committee: 5 to 10 members
- The chair of the Stakeholders Assembly is part of the Steering Committee
- Independent scientific experts who can be consulted on specific questions

Selection process for members:
- Nomination by the Stakeholders Assembly

Mandate: One work cycle (2 years)

RESEARCH DIRECTOR COORDINATES PRODUCTION

CREATES WORKING GROUPS

PROVIDES GUIDANCE AND FEEDBACK FOR THE DRAFTING PROCESS

SUBMITS DRAFT REPORTS FOR VALIDATION

WORKING GROUPS

Missions:
Production of reports
- Creating call for contributions
- Sourcing scientific contributions
- Coordinating authors and contributors
- Writing of chapters
- Editing and proofreading

Composition:
- 4 to 5 working groups organized by themes
- 1 chair per working group
- 20 to 50 experts with the following roles: authors, contributors, reviewers
- 1 to 2 staff rapporteurs per working group, responsible for producing the deliverable chapters

Selection process:
- Steering Committee leads the selection process
- Experts can apply voluntarily, or be approached by the Steering Committee

2.3.3/ A stakeholders' assembly in charge of strategic decisions and political supervision

Two options were studied within a scenario that built a system of governance based on a stakeholders' assembly:

- The first option proposed was to compose the assembly of states' representatives in charge of strategic decisions, and observers' organizations.
- The second option studied was an assembly representing all the stakeholders' voices, with representatives from states, scientific organizations, and recognized NGOs organized into colleges.

The scenario with a stakeholders' assembly in a central role was not selected, as the setting up of meetings for decision-making would have been very time consuming, due to the size of the stakeholders' assembly. This would not have been concomitant with the speed of work necessary for the Observatory's efficient functioning.

2.3.3

FORUM ON INFORMATION AND DEMOCRACY BOARD

Missions:
- Staff management & recruitment
- Nominates civil society representatives for the stakeholders' assembly

Composition:
- 11 board members

SUPERVISES

STAKEHOLDERS ASSEMBLY

Missions:
Strategic decisions & political supervision
- Selects main theme for the report
- Strategic planning
- Validates budget
- Validates reports

Composition:
Divided into 3 categories
- 1. Researchers' representatives
- 2. States' representatives
- 3. Civil society representatives

DEFINES STRATEGIC GUIDELINES

NOMINATES STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

SUPPORTS

OBSERVATORY STAFF

Missions:

1. Administrative responsibilities
- Facilitates communication between the working groups and governance
- Prepares the draft budget
- Formats the reports and key documents

2. Policy
- Sources experts for the Steering Committee
- Sources rapporteurs for each working group

3. Dissemination
- Prepares summits, seminars and meetings

STEERING COMMITTEE

Missions:
Production supervision
- Identifies experts and authors to contribute
- Proposes themes and chapters for the working groups
- Follows up on the writing process
- Analyzes the working groups' conclusions and recommendations

Composition:
A Steering Committee & independent scientific experts
- Steering Committee: 5 to 10 members
- The chair of the Stakeholders Assembly is part of the Steering Committee
- Independent scientific experts who can be consulted on specific questions

Selection process for members:
- Nomination by the Stakeholders Assembly

Mandate: One work cycle (2 years)

RESEARCH DIRECTOR COORDINATES PRODUCTION

CREATES WORKING GROUPS

PROVIDES GUIDANCE AND FEEDBACK FOR THE DRAFTING PROCESS

SUBMITS DRAFT REPORTS FOR VALIDATION

WORKING GROUPS

Missions:
Production of reports
- Creating call for contributions
- Sourcing scientific contributions
- Coordinating authors and contributors
- Writing of chapters
- Editing and proofreading

Composition:
- 4 to 5 working groups organized by themes
- 1 chair per working group
- 20 to 50 experts with the following roles: authors, contributors, reviewers
- 1 to 2 staff rapporteurs per working group, responsible for producing the deliverable chapters

Selection process:
- Steering Committee leads the selection process
- Experts can apply voluntarily, or be approached by the Steering Committee

2.4/ **PARTNERS**

The Observatory's sustainability and success are strongly linked to its ability to establish a solid and diversified network on an international scale, including institutional actors, researchers, and civil society organizations. This diversity would contribute strongly to the credibility of reports. The positive reception of reports would in turn encourage researchers to join an initiative perceived as having a powerful political impact, in a virtuous circle.

However, this mobilization will not be the result of a financial incentive. Researchers' contributions will be voluntary and motivated by their participation in an international normative movement, by the quality of the reports produced, the reports' dissemination to decision-makers, and by the academic recognition that will result.

2.4.1/ Supporting the Observatory with centers of expertise

Research carried out during the prefiguration phase led to the conclusion that the Observatory needs to rely on existing centers of expertise to develop its capacities. These centers could provide support by making their experts available to contribute to the various working groups, and offer logistical support by hosting seminars and meetings.

However, prefiguration research revealed that setting up fixed centers of expertise carries a risk if financial contributions from states is the main source of funding, as it could limit financial contributions from states that refuse to finance centers of expertise outside of their countries.

An interesting alternative to mitigate this risk would be to set up a network of research centers in each signatory state. These institutions would make it possible to nurture exchanges with researchers at the national level and to bring material for consideration by working groups at a global level. Such a network would also contribute to the Observatory's influence.

In addition to these structural anchors, more targeted partnerships with other centers would be added to provide regular and useful contributions to the reports. Given the risks of loss of independence associated with this type of partnership, a validation procedure by the Observatory's governance bodies is essential. The Steering Committee would be responsible for approving new partnerships. This process would allow a fast and flexible inclusion of partners while guaranteeing the validation by the Observatory's governance.

2.4.2/ Developing the Observatory's network

The selection of the first partners and their integration into the work of the Observatory will be crucial for its long-term legitimacy. The two main targets in shaping the Observatory's network will be:

- **The scientific community,** including associations of researchers and research laboratories that would help in collecting the academic elements necessary to the Observatory's work, and in sourcing qualified experts to achieve this work.
- **The general public** will allow the Observatory to gain visibility and increase its impact. Public involvement will raise awareness and facilitate the collection of field elements (such as actions, testimonies, resources, problems) useful to the state-of-the-art investigations conducted by the Observatory.

CHAPTER 3/ **METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORTS**

The Production of Reports at a Glance

The Observatory's main role will be to produce a synthesis of the main findings from research on the information and communication space.[12] This will be published as a biennial report during the International Summits for Information and Democracy. The reports will be addressed to governments, policymakers, regulatory bodies, and civil society organizations to provide a common and shared understanding of the structure of the information and communication space and how it impacts democracy.

The main report will be composed of several volumes, each one constituting a synthesis of the contributions relating to a specific question. These volumes will be divided into chapters on a specific theme, and chapters will be divided into sections: a subset of a chapter written on the basis of contributions and academic reviews on a given subject.

In order to achieve this research synthesis, the production processes will need to be both transparent – to ensure that their scientific legitimacy is recognized – and ambitious, as the Observatory will have to process a substantial amount of information and mobilize a multitude of actors on an international scale.

The working groups in charge of drafting the reports will have four main tasks:

- **Material collection:** researching articles on academic databases and from contributions received.
- **Drafting phase:** synthesizing collected data.
- **First revision cycle:** the Steering Committee and editor-reviewers will comment on the first draft; the working groups will be in charge of drafting a second version incorporating the comments.
- **Second revision cycle:** external actors will review and comment on the second draft and the working groups will propose a final version.

The final draft will be approved by the Steering Committee and formatted by the permanent team of the Observatory for publication and dissemination.

3.1/ **SCOPE OF WORK**

As the Observatory will be building its federation of the scientific community over time, we will initially restrict the scope of work to the first work cycle.

It is important to leave some freedom to the Observatory's Steering Committee to determine the priority of the themes to be addressed. The example of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), which has biodiversity as its subject, but which does not have as strict a definition of the term biodiversity as it does of temperature, can be used as a model for defining the work plan of the Observatory.

12 Definition from the United Nations: "Democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised. People have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers to account. Women and men have equal rights and all people are free from discrimination."

3.2/ **FORMAT**

Instituting the publication of a biennial report

The main mission of the Observatory on Information and Democracy is to propose, in the form of a biennial report, a synthesis of the main knowledge resulting from research on the information and communication space. The report will provide an overview of the state-of-the-art of existing research, informing the questions raised in the framework of regulatory decisions. It will also provide an assessment of the gaps in research. This report will be addressed to governments, policymakers, regulatory bodies, NGOs, public information bodies, and tech corporations, to provide a shared understanding of the structure of the information and communication space and how it impacts democracy.[13]

The main report will be composed of several volumes, each one constituting a synthesis of the contributions relating to a specific question to answer. The volumes will be divided into chapters on a specific theme, and chapters divided into sections: a subset of a chapter written on the basis of contributions on a given subject. Defining the "fields of study", the "thematic units" and the "sections" will be the object of a preparatory study by the Steering Committee relating to the problems expressed regarding the perspective of public policies on the one hand, and the fields of investigation of the researchers on the other.

The lessons learned from the prefiguration phase led to a recommendation for additional elements to be published with the main report:

- A Summary for Policymakers, which summarizes the knowledge drawn from the evaluation report, written in a suitable style for quick reading and covering a wide range of policy-relevant issues. This will include the summary itself and a technical appendix, which is a longer, more detailed and specialized version of the information contained in the summary.
- Communication documents targeting the general public, as the information provided by the report is intended to be discussed by civil society at all levels.
- A bibliography.
- Working documents (including reports from dialogues, workshops and expert meetings).
- Resources, tools and databases that facilitate the preparation or use of the Observatory's reports.

Each report will focus on a main theme, recommended by the Stakeholders' Advisory Group and selected by the Steering Committee. The field of issues concerning the relationship between information and democracy is evolving rapidly, so it is important that the Observatory adapts to this pace by focusing on a new theme for each report.

Provisional adoption of a more flexible report structure

The first work cycle will require a simplified production process, which can be implemented by:

- Allowing the working groups autonomy in the drafting of their parts;
- Limiting the publication of the report to the summary for decision-makers, the documents for the general public, and the bibliography.

Optional reports on specific themes

In addition to the biennial report, the Observatory could publish complementary reports responding to specific regional requirements. Complementary reports would follow the structure of main reports, but focus on a given region. They could also focus on a few specific themes within that region. Proposing this type of report would make it possible to deal in a differentiated way with the problems of the so-called democratically developed countries and those of countries in democratic transition.

13 Definition from the United Nations: "Democracy provides an environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in which the freely expressed will of people is exercised. People have a say in decisions and can hold decision-makers to account. Women and men have equal rights and all people are free from discrimination."

A complementary report with a specific thematic focus could also be considered if the importance of the debate around its theme is justified, or if the report responds to an important demand from states or facilitates the study of an emerging theme.

3.3/ PRODUCTION METHOD

The production process requires a well-defined framework that can be understood by all stakeholders, while remaining sufficiently flexible to evolve with the Observatory's growth over time.

The first version of this process, based on **the following main roles** is as follows:

- **Contributors** are experts (such as researchers and institutions) who have produced relevant studies.
- **Editors** are recognized experts on a given subject who can, on behalf of the Observatory, write a "section", i.e., research and synthesize a set of significant contributions on their subject of expertise.
- **Coordinators** have a broader expertise on a set of subjects. Their mission is to verify that the writers of the sections constituting a "chapter" cover the entire field, without too many gaps or overlaps. They are also responsible for verifying that the editors have respected the Observatory's values (transparency, breadth of vision, respect for all points of view, etc.) and that the remarks and observations of the editor-reviewers have been addressed.
- **Editors-reviewers** are responsible for reviewing the drafts at various stages of progress and making any comments and observations they deem appropriate.

These roles will be performed by individuals or by small working groups, the latter being the preferred option to reduce the risk of subjectivity.

The production's framework will be governed by a series of principles facilitating the cooperation of experts and ensuring the legitimacy of the work.

The production framework will be as follows:

- **Definition of themes and chapter divisions**

  The Steering Committee is responsible for the definition of the themes that need to be prioritized and the allocation of these themes to different chapters. This task is at the crossroads of several objectives and constraints. Firstly, the necessary relevance of the report: the fact that it covers the fields of interest of the Observatory and synthesizes the contributions of research to all the questions related to these fields. Secondly, the necessary readability of the report, which will require compromises between the detail and precision required (which are the responsibility of the most specialized expertise), and the synthesis necessary for an overall view. Finally, the feasibility of the process: the division of the report into chapters and sections, in particular, is intended to channel the expertise required for each part, and thus facilitate the search for writers to take on the task.

- **The appointment of experts**

  The Steering Committee, with the support of the permanent team, will source and select authors and experts to draft the reports. The selection criteria will be an important element in composing the working groups. Among these criteria, the possible conflicts of interest of certain authors who may hold positions within private industry, in parallel with their missions as researchers, will be studied. The Steering Committee will also determine the definition of the criteria for the selection of authors, as well as the elements that could attest to a potential conflict of interest.

- **Working groups**

  Distribution of experts per chapter and section will facilitate the production and coordination of the work. Each working group will be supported by a rapporteur in charge of producing the deliverable reports.

When setting up the working groups, the following founding principles will be necessary to ensure the credibility of the work and comprehensive representation of different points of view. The composition of the working groups will need to include:

- Variety of opinions and knowledge in the field;
- Appropriate geographic representation;
- Current diversity of knowledge systems;
- Fair representation of stakeholders.

- **Call for contributions**

Each working group will issue a call for contributions. The relevance of the work produced will depend on the contributions received, their quality and diversity. Some actors will be essential in disseminating this call:

- The Steering Committee via its members and their professional networks.
- The signatory states to make the initiative visible, to confirm their support and to reinforce the credibility of the calls for contributions.
- The academic community and scientific journals, in order to widen the circle of contributors and allow experts who are not yet part of the Observatory's network to join the initiative.

The contributions will be received and centralized by the permanent team, which will classify them according to chapter structure, and make them available to the working groups for analysis.

- **The validation of sources**

The Observatory will rely on the criteria of the scientific community, such as the prior publication of contributions in accredited peer-reviewed journals, to vet academic resources.

Non-academic sources, such as reports drawn up by governments, industry, international organizations, civil society organizations, or the media will be subject to a procedure to be established by the Steering Committee. A system of credibility coefficients will be used. The use of less-academic references puts more responsibility on the teams of editors, who will have to ensure the quality and validity of the sources and information cited.

- **The expression of disagreements**

Disagreements between experts are an inescapable reality. It is not the role of a report's editors to settle such disagreements. The structure of the reports in chapters is intended to ensure that disagreements between experts in the same field are focused on topics that are sufficiently well-defined for the experts to either resolve their disagreements, or to express them in terms that are acceptable to both parties. The review of the presentations of disagreements by all researchers concerned is a guarantee of transparency and objectivity that will be imposed by the Observatory.

Disagreements between experts from different fields are also to be considered. They may reflect personal differences, but they may also reflect profound differences in methods and conceptions between disciplines. One possibility, the one adopted by the IPCC, for example, is to separate the points of view that are too (scientifically) irreconcilable in different volumes, leaving it to the political level to achieve a synthesis. This point is important and reinforces a strong dimension of the Observatory: expertise cannot replace politics.

- **Levels of review**

The review process of the reports contributes to the scientific legitimacy of the Observatory's work.

As many experts as possible should be involved in the review process, ensuring the representation of independent experts from as diverse a geographical and disciplinary background as possible. They will apply individually, or on behalf of their institution, or be invited to comment on the Observatory's

reports. The involvement of public authorities is desired and necessary to ensure the relevance of the analyzes for application in public policy, but this involvement needs to be strictly defined to avoid any kind of influence. Finally, review from civil society is also recommended in order to validate the scientific conclusions, and confront these conclusions with the field and the eyes and experiences of citizens.

The review process should be transparent and ensure that every comment is taken into account. To solicit reviewers, channels identical to those used for the dissemination of calls for contributions will be used by issuing calls for comments.

- **Relationship with tech corporations**

  The Observatory will ensure a dialogue with private actors, thanks to the participation of their representatives within the Stakeholders Advisory Group.

  These tech corporations will be able to share their challenges and shortcomings to implement best practices. This information will be at the disposal of the Steering Committee and working groups to feed the analyses.

  The Observatory should protect itself from any potential conflict of interest associated with its experts and authors. Academic publications from research programs funded by major tech companies should not be taken into account in the synthesis reports.

3.4/ **DISSEMINATION**

The dissemination of reports will be a key element in ensuring that the Observatory's work has a high impact.

3.4.1/ Dissemination within the Observatory's network

It will be essential to capitalize on the Observatory's members for far-reaching dissemination of the Observatory's work. The diversity and visibility of experts would facilitate broad dissemination of the work. The Forum's network, including its Board of Directors and the coalition of civil society organizations, will be the first player in the dissemination of reports. The stakeholders' advisory group will facilitate dissemination to a broader audience. States' representatives will play a key role in sharing the reports at the highest levels and ensure the dissemination in their own country to scientific actors and NGOs. The Steering Committee and working groups experts would be responsible for sharing their work with their professional network.

3.4.2/ Global dissemination

Sharing the reports outside the Observatory's community will be necessary to expand its impact and increase its visibility. The global dissemination will rely on four pillars:

- Innovative and impactful communication strategy
- Strong press relations to ensure media coverage of the evaluation reports both targeting professional media and public-interest media
- Rely on a roster of influencing prominent figures, partners, and contributors to the activities of the report
- Promote the work of the Observatory during international events such as the UNESCO World conference on press freedom, the UN General Assembly, the Summit for Information and Democracy, the Paris Peace Forum, among others.

CHAPTER 4/ **FINANCIAL NEEDS AND RESOURCES ENVISAGED**

Financial Aspects at a Glance

The funding of the Observatory is an important element in confirming its legitimacy and independence. Several items of expenditure need to be taken into account in the budget forecast: the salaries of the permanent team, the costs of seminars and meetings, and the travel expenses of authors, as well as costs related to the production of reports, their translation and publication.

Several sources of funding are possible, in particular the solicitation of voluntary contributions from signatory states and the support of international partner organizations.

Alternative options could be explored, such as soliciting private foundations or crowdfunding. The financial support from states and international organizations could be complemented by in-kind contributions for the hosting of conferences, supporting permanent staff by assigning specific experts to the task, or providing office space.

Funding for the Observatory will be received via the Forum on Information and Democracy, which will then distribute resources to the Observatory.

4.1/ **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

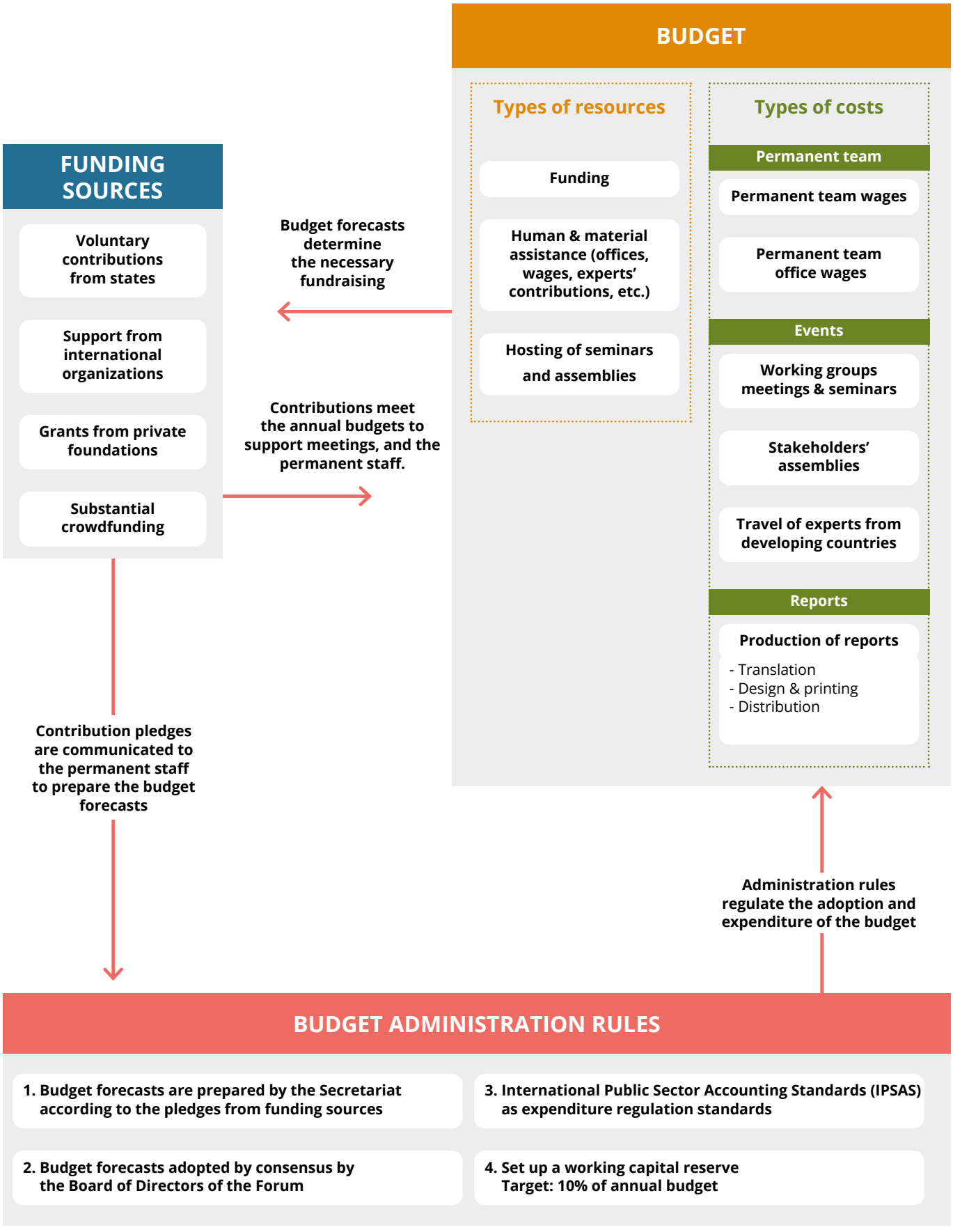
The diversity of funding supporting the Observatory would ensure its legitimacy and independence. Prefiguration research revealed two options that could be envisaged to ensure the reception of diversified funding:

- The first option would be the creation of a trust fund. Such a legal entity is used by a large number of international organizations, including the IPCC.[14] This option would take a long time to implement, and would probably not be necessary as the Observatory will be an integrated part of the Forum on Information and Democracy.
- The second option would be to transmit financial resources from the Forum on Information and Democracy to the Observatory. The Forum would then be responsible for redistributing funding from its own resources to the Observatory, as a sub-recipient.

The second option has been selected, as creating a new independent structure for the Observatory would be very time-consuming and less reassuring for donors. Building on the foundation of the Forum, which has existed since 2018,[15] could be an additional safeguard to help sustain the Observatory's funding.

14 IPCC trust fund programme and budget, Appendix 6 (2012) https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/decision_p35_budget.pdf

15 Reporters Without Borders, The International Commission on Information & Democracy https://rsf.org/en/commission


BUDGET
Types of resources
Funding
Human & material assistance (offices, wages, experts' contributions, etc.)
Hosting of seminars and assemblies
Types of costs
Permanent team
Permanent team wages
Permanent team office wages
Events
Working groups meetings & seminars
Stakeholders' assemblies
Travel of experts from developing countries
Reports
Production of reports
- Translation
- Design & printing
- Distribution
FUNDING SOURCES
Voluntary contributions from states
Support from international organizations
Grants from private foundations
Substantial crowdfunding
Budget forecasts determine the necessary fundraising
Contributions meet the annual budgets to support meetings, and the permanent staff.
Contribution pledges are communicated to the permanent staff to prepare the budget forecasts
Administration rules regulate the adoption and expenditure of the budget
BUDGET ADMINISTRATION RULES
1. Budget forecasts are prepared by the Secretariat according to the pledges from funding sources
2. Budget forecasts adopted by consensus by the Board of Directors of the Forum
3. International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) as expenditure regulation standards
4. Set up a working capital reserve Target: 10% of annual budget

4.1.1/ Principles for budget forecasting

Budget estimates need to include:

- **Salaries of the permanent collaborators** and the necessary tools for their work.
- **Costs of seminars** in which the working groups meet. The estimates foresee three seminars per year to realize the reports effectively. A detailed budget projection for the organization of a conference is presented in Appendix 4. To limit the expenses related to the seminars the costs could be supported by the host country or the host partner organization.
- **Travel expenses of authors from developing countries** for work meetings and seminars. This funding would allow more balanced participation from the different regions of the world. Such a system has been implemented by the IPCC.[16] In order to launch the process, and to gather a sufficient number of experts, the Observatory could pay for the travel expenses of all the experts for the first work cycle specifically.

4.1.2/ Rules for administering the budget

The management of the annual budget should also involve rules of administration:

- Budget forecasts must be adopted by consensus by the Forum's Board of Directors before the beginning of the period they cover.
- A working capital reserve should be established to ensure continuity of operations in the event of liquidity problems, pending receipt of voluntary contributions. The Observatory will target 10% of the average annual budget for this reserve.

4.2/ **ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE**

4.2.1/ Salaries of the permanent staff

The permanent staff will comprise a team of from 4 to 12 collaborators to manage administrative tasks. This number will depend on the work cycles and to what extent the workforce can be merged with those of potential partners.

As an example from research conducted during the prefiguration phase: the total sum of salaries for the IPBES Secretariat in 2021 was US$2,2 million,[17] and US$2 million for the IPCC Secretariat.[18] Note that for IPBES, this is the budget after nine years of operation. Budget amounts are of course subject to change between the creation phase and after a decade of existence.

4.2.2/ The organization of seminars is a key element in enabling the collaboration of experts

Although the states hosting the seminars may possibly support related expenses, the Observatory has to foresee a budget including: costs of the venue, meals and receptions during the events, and the necessary equipment. As an example, the total budget of the IPBES for the organization of meetings, conferences and plenary sessions in 2021 was US$1.4 million.[19]

16 IPCC trust fund programme and budget, Paragraph 8 (2012) "A purpose of the IPCC Trust Fund is to provide support for travel of experts from developing countries and economies-in transition." https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/decision_p35_budget.pdf

17 IPBES/8/5, Financial and budgetary arrangements for the Platform. Part B: Work programme up to 2030, 2. Secretariat, page 18 (2021) https://ipbes.net/system/files/2021-04/ipbes_8_5_financial_and_budgetary_arrangements_en.pdf

18 IPCC trust fund program and budget (2021). IPCC-LIV(bis)/Doc. 2, p.17 Annex 8 https://apps.ipcc.ch/eventmanager/documents/71/1510202108 12-Doc.%202%20-%20IPCC%20Programme%20and%20Budget.pdf

19 IPBES/8/5, Financial and budgetary arrangements for the Platform. Part B: Work programme up to 2030, 2. Secretariat, page 18 (2021) https://ipbes.net/system/files/2021-04/ipbes_8_5_financial_and_budgetary_arrangements_en.pdf

4.2.3/ Travel costs for experts from developing countries

Prefiguration-phase research indicated that if the proposal is retained to fund the travel of experts from developing countries only, a five-day meeting, travel, and daily subsistence allowance would amount to US$3,300 per person for global meetings and US$2,100 per person for regional meetings. These budget estimates are based on the IPCC budgets20 (Appendix 5).

4.2.4/ Costs related to report production, translation and publication

The following are estimates for the productions (Appendix 5):

- Translation and publication costs for summaries for policymakers in two languages: English and French.
- Publication costs for large reports (1,000 copies in English only) are estimated at US$10,000 for 100-page documents, US$17,000 for 200-page documents and US$25,000 for 500-page documents according to IPBES21 expenditures.

4.3/ **TYPES OF FINANCING TO BE CONSIDERED**

As a result of knowledge gained during the prefiguration work, various channels for funding of the Observatory have been analyzed, including financial contributions from the signatory states, international partner organizations, and from private foundations.

The first source of funding pictured is a **voluntary contribution from signatory states,** as is the case for the IPCC and the IPBES (Appendix 5). The voluntary aspect of contributions implies a risk of obtaining an insufficient amount to cover the Observatory's needs. It also implies having an uncertain vision of contributions that will be received annually. The way to mitigate these risks and uncertainties is to ask signatory states to commit to contributions over several years, ideally over three-year cycles.

International partner organizations will also be asked to contribute financially to the Observatory's activities. For example, in the case of the IPCC, the United Nations Environment Programme contributed US$2,9 million between 1988 and 2019, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change funded US$7,1 million over the same period, and the World Meteorological Organization contributed US$3,1 million.[22]

Donations from private foundations will also be considered (IPBES, for example, benefits from donations from four private corporate foundations, which contributed up to US$595,65923 between January 2018 and April 2021). Close attention will have to be paid to the potential risk of conflicts of interest that some collaborations with the private sector could generate, as the integrity and independence of the Observatory must be maintained as priorities.

20 IPBES/2/17. Report of the second session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2013) Cost items and general assumptions, page 63. https://ipbes.net/resource-file/3867

21 IPBES/2/17. Report of the second session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2013) Cost items and general assumptions, page 63. https://ipbes.net/resource-file/3867

22 IPCC TRust fund programme and budget. IPCC-LIII/Doc. 2, Rev. 1, p.8 https://apps.ipcc.ch/eventmanager/documents/63/041220200840-Doc.%202,%20Rev.%201%20-%20IPCC%20Programme%20and%20Budget.pdf

23 IPBES/8/5, Status of cash contributions received and pledges made since 2018. Table 1 (1 January 2018–15 April 2021) https://ipbes.net/system/files/2021-04/ipbes_8_5_financial_and_budgetary_arrangements_en.pdf

CHAPTER 5/ **CREATION OF THE OBSERVATORY**

Next Steps to Launch the Observatory

The first work cycle, aiming at the publication of the 2024 Observatory report, will be based on the creation of a minimum permanent team composed of four full-time staff and the organization of three seminars per year. The experts' participation will be encouraged by the funding of travels to the meetings.

The year 2022 will be devoted to the establishment of the Observatory's system of governance. In 2023, the working groups will be set up and a first draft of the report will be written. In 2024, the two stages of revision and rewriting will be set up, for a publication of the report in September 2024.

During subsequent work cycles, the permanent team will be strengthened, and the experts' travel expenses will be funded only for experts from developing countries.

5.1/ **NEEDS FOR THE FIRST EDITION**

The development of legitimacy is a key point in the progressive construction of the Observatory. The Observatory's work requires the active and voluntary participation of a large number of experts and researchers. The stable establishment of the Observatory is therefore not only a question of financial means, but rather a capacity to mobilize and federate a solid community of experts to produce its work.

5.1.1/ Key stages of the Observatory's construction

Prefiguration research suggested that the progressive construction of the Observatory should be conducted in two key stages:

- The structuring of the first work cycle as a minimum version of the organization with the objective of publishing the first report in 2024.
- A progressively perfected organization over the subsequent work cycles.

5.1.2/ Planned evolution of governance and key processes

During the Observatory's first work cycle, it is recommended that governance bodies are set up to ensure the main functions of governance and the main processes, such as the organization of the drafting of the report and the revision process. This initial organization of work will not necessarily predetermine the subsequent forms of governance and work processes, which will continue to evolve.

5.1.3/ Production schedule

Work carried out in the prefiguration phase has led to the following schedule for a launch of the Observatory in 2022, and the publication of the first report in 2024 at the Summit for Information and Democracy.

September 2022:

- Official launch of the first work cycle of the Observatory at the Summit for Information and Democracy

October 2022:

- First meeting of the Stakeholders Advisory Group to recommend the priority themes for the first report

November 2022:

- First meeting of the Steering Committee to select the theme of the first report

Q1 2023:

- Sourcing and selection process of experts and authors by the Steering Committee
- Chapter definition by the Steering Committee
- Launch of the working groups

Q2 2023:

- Launch of the call for contributions
- First seminar of the working groups

Q3 2023:

- Receiving and analyzing contributions
- Working groups draft their contributions to chapters
- Second seminar of the working groups

Q4 2023:

- Working groups draft their contributions to chapters
- Third seminar of the working groups

Q1 2024:

- Publication of the first version of the report
- Revision of the first version of the report
- Fourth seminar of the working groups

Q2 2024:

- Release of the second draft of the report
- Revision of the second draft of the report

Q3 2024:

- Final version of report released

5.1.4/ Priority of needs for the first report

For the first work cycle of the Observatory, a reduced administrative support will be a useful first step before the establishment of a full permanent team for subsequent work cycles. The mobilization of authors and experts will be a priority need.

The minimum logistical needs identified to produce the first report in 2024 are:

- A minimum version of the permanent team including:
    - a research director
    - an project coordinator (full-time)
    - four rapporteurs (one per working group)
- An office
- A first version of the Observatory's website
- The organization of three seminars per year, gathering all the working groups
- The funding to offer the authors' travel expenses

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Main Methods to Study Impacts of Social Media on Democratic Principles

The study of the impact of social media on democratic principles is more complex than it seems. Easy though it is to identify the different settings (a Facebook group, a Youtube channel), measuring their importance or impact is delicate. Among the main methods for studying the impact of social media on democratic processes are:

Visualizations

Modeling of digital traces to map the public space and its dynamics; quantification and visualization of the evolution of a political landscape on different networks (e.g., publications and public comments on Facebook, political speeches, international negotiations).

Research of correlations and causalities between digital media and the evolution of different types of variables, such as trust in institutions and media; the degree of information the public has access to; the plurality of sources and opinions represented; or issues such as discrimination, polarization, and segregation. These correlations take different forms. However, while it is fairly easy to identify correlations, identifying causal relationships is far more complex. A number of factors influence this:

- Population studies linking variables such as the diffusion of the internet and electoral polarization in different countries, or in a given country, over different age groups.
- The use of public APIs and datasets provided by tech corporations to researchers in the framework of conventions or exchange protocols such as Social Science One.
- The design of automatic protocols simulating users interacting with social media in order to study the effects of recommendation systems.
- Building predictive models of certain behaviors or trends and comparing their results with actual behaviors.

Tests and experiments

- Most often carried out by the tech corporations themselves, by modifying parameters, in order to optimize user engagement.
- Governments agree with tech corporations to conduct these types of studies in a transparent way. Tech corporations would gain a better understanding of the risks of their own practices, and governments would have the information they need to make decisions. Agreeing to engage in these types of studies would provide an important measure of transparency for tech corporations. This transparency would be related to the effects of the algorithms, not how they work.
- In ongoing studies, by asking volunteers to behave in certain ways.
- By studying the effect of a strategy to counter a phenomenon on social media.

Simulations

- Simulations of tech corporations with controlled characteristics to test certain effects.
- Debate on the conditions of transfer of laboratory results, especially in cognitive sciences.

Appendix 2: Tech Corporations' Block on Data Access

1. The difficulty of obtaining access to research-relevant data, as these are essentially held by the tech corporations, as well as the difficulty of obtaining the most interesting data for research:

- The difficulty of checking studies conducted by tech corporations themselves or by researchers working with tech corporations and bound by special contracts including pre-publication approval mechanisms (in particular with Facebook).
- The difficulty for tech corporations to produce data of sufficient quality.
- The reliability of the information provided (What we can observe? What information do we have? Where does it come from? How reliable is it? What are our means to evaluate its reliability? For example, what do we know about Google's algorithm?)

2. Regulatory limits on data transmission:

- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) contains some exceptions for certain types of research (Article 89), but it is very restrictive, and the interpretation given by member states differs, which increases the problem. Another issue is the procedures required to limit the risks regarding privacy and the degree of anonymization (or pseudonymization) required for data from social media.
- The use of the GDPR as a pretext by tech corporations to limit data transmission.

3. Specific or technical barriers:

- The barriers related to privacy are not only related to governmental restrictions but also to access to information. For example, some questions imply access to individual and not only statistical data, and this is often unreliable (e.g., is age a factor of awareness of polarization due to social networks?)
- Technological development can help access to data by allowing the development of differentiated forms of privacy, but can also limit research if tech corporations decide to adopt encrypted forms.
- The social background of people who express themselves on the web and social networks remains largely unknown; information such as income or educational level, social category, age, or gender is missing.

4. The lack of a global data-sharing paradigm:

- From a legislative point of view, the research community needs more than a clarification of the GDPR, it needs a safe harbor for research data, enshrined by the European Commission.
- From an economic point of view, there is a real benefit/risk balance to be examined between limiting access to data (which de facto favors the companies that already have it) and increased access that allows for deeper analysis and better public access to this analysis.
- From an ethical point of view, what are the ethical standards and norms for research on social media? For example, for participant observation in Whatsapp-type discussion groups (participation that can be anonymous or silent). These questions could gain in scope if the use of encrypted messaging becomes widespread.

Appendix 3: Evaluation and Revision of the Observatory's Processes

Option #1: Conducting a single evaluation by an external actor

The evaluation of the Observatory's processes would be conducted at the end of the work cycle. This evaluation would be carried out by an external entity, selected by the Steering Committee to ensure the objectivity of its conclusions. This external team would be responsible for examining the procedures for the preparation of reports, analyzing the administration functions within the Observatory, as well as the relations with the different stakeholders. The conclusions of this evaluation could be presented in an evaluation report, with an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations. This first option is inspired by what has been set up within the IPCC regarding the evaluation of internal procedures.

Option #2: Conduct two evaluations, an internal evaluation and a final external evaluation

This second proposal is inspired by the evaluation processes set up by the IPBES. It would consist of an evaluation of the Observatory's procedures in two stages. A first evaluation carried out internally halfway through the work cycle, followed by a second evaluation carried out by an external and independent team. This first evaluation could be carried out by the Steering Committee. The findings of this evaluation would be compiled in an evaluation report covering the administrative aspects, the effectiveness of the Observatory's functions, and recommendations. This report would be shared to the Forum's Board of Directors. The second evaluation would be conducted by an external team and administered by a reputable international organization. This evaluation would focus on the implementation of the Observatory's functions and the effectiveness of the procedures for establishing the Observatory's outputs. The conclusions of this evaluation would be examined by the Forum's Board of Directors.

Regarding the budget for collaboration with an external independent entity, it is suggested that the external team offers their services on a voluntary basis. A budget could be allocated to cover travel expenses.

Appendix 4: Estimates of Cost Expenditure and Resources, from Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)[24]

Travel and per diem expenses for meeting participants.

Only participants from developing countries are funded to attend meetings. For a five-day meeting, travel and would be US$3,000 per person for global meetings, and US$2,000 per person for regional meetings. For sub-regional meetings, the travel and DSA costs would be US$1,500 per person.

Cost of ad hoc face-to-face meetings.

The cost of meetings includes office rental, office equipment, and hospitality. The cost of meetings varies depending on their duration and the number of participants. For simplicity, a five-day meeting is assumed. Smaller meetings, with 25 to 75 participants, cost between US$10,000 and US$20,000. Medium-sized meetings, with between 100 and 150 attendees, cost between US$25,000 and US$40,000. Larger meetings, with 200 to 250 participants, cost US$50,000 to US$60,000.
Cost of online conferences.
The time of the experts chairing the online conference would be considered an in-kind contribution.

Cost of translation, publications and information.

Translation and publication costs depend on the number of pages of the document to be translated and published, and information costs depend on the audience to be reached. Translation and publication costs for summaries for policymakers in the six official UN languages are estimated at US$35,000 for 5-page documents, US$50,000 for 10-page documents and US$150,000 for 25-page documents. Publication costs for large reports (1,000 copies in English only) are estimated at US$10,000 for 100-page documents, US$17,000 for 200-page documents and US$25,000 for 500-page documents. Information costs range from about US$40,000 to US$50,000 for regional or rapid assessments and up to US$500,000 for global assessments.

Cost of technical support staff.

Technical support staff are assigned to a variety of activities: coordination, administration, and facilitation of the work of expert groups and task forces; communication with authors, reviewers, and experts in capacity building and knowledge and data management; preparation and organization of meetings and online conferences; compilation and editing of drafts; and coordination of editing.

24 Taken from: IPBES/2/17. Report of the second session of the Plenary of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (2013)
Cost items and general assumptions, page 63. https://ipbes.net/document-library-catalogue/ipbes217

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Contact: contact@informationdemocracy.org