THE PLATFORM AND THE MODERN WEST

How Facebook Reshaped Modern Societies

Society, business and political power in the West, 2004 to 2026



DRISS EFFINA

GLOBAL STRATEGY FILES

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Society, business and political power in the West, 2004 to 2026. Evidence and scenarios to 2035

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How Facebook Reshaped Modern Societies
Society, business and political power in the West, 2004 to 2026

by Dr. Driss Effina

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About this edition

A full research manuscript in English, with thirty chapters, fifty analytical figures, twelve methods appendices, a statistical atlas, and a linked source ledger.

Historical coverage: 2004 to October 29, 2026. The requested period is interpreted as twenty-two years since Facebook's founding. Individual datasets begin and end at their actual reporting boundaries.

The quantitative contribution consists of new calculations and model diagnostics applied to public observations. Published causal findings are attributed to their original studies. Illustrative mechanisms and future scenarios are labeled explicitly.

This edition is an original synthesis prepared with AI-assisted research and writing. It is not a claim of independent peer review. Source links and reproducible calculations accompany the manuscript.

All financial amounts are nominal US dollars unless otherwise specified. Facebook-specific measures, Family of Apps measures, and consolidated company accounts are kept distinct.

Information cutoff: October 29, 2026. References and figure definitions are integral to the analysis.

Preface

Facebook's deepest influence is not captured by the number of accounts on a screen. It is visible in the way a household finds information, a small business reaches a customer, a community organizes help, and a political actor assembles an audience. These activities are ordinary enough to disappear into daily routine. Their migration into a common commercial infrastructure is one of the major institutional changes of the early twenty-first century.

This book examines that change in English for readers interested in economics, society, business, and public policy. Its central claim is that Facebook redistributed the cost and control of coordination. It made useful connections easier while increasing dependence on the rules of a private distributor. The balance differs across people, organizations, and countries. A serious assessment therefore needs more than a single verdict about whether social media improved or damaged society.

The historical window runs from 2004 to October 29, 2026. The phrase twenty-two years refers to elapsed time since Facebook's founding. Data coverage differs by measure, and the book does not invent observations to fill early gaps. Its Western comparisons focus on the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, and Finland. Global company statistics are used to establish scale; they are not mislabeled as Western social outcomes.

The evidence produces several clear findings. The company's commercial expansion continued after Facebook's early diffusion phase. American adult use remained broad while teenage use fell substantially. Advertising volume and price contributed differently across years. Political experiments showed effects that depended

on the intervention and outcome rather than a universal mechanism of persuasion. Country differences in information institutions remained large despite shared exposure to the same platform.

The original analysis connects these findings through three dimensions: access, conversion, and dependence. Access is the ability to reach people or information. Conversion is the useful action produced by that reach. Dependence is the cost of losing or changing the channel. The framework explains how a platform can enlarge opportunity and vulnerability at the same time. It also identifies what conventional user and revenue statistics leave unmeasured.

Originality here means original synthesis, transparent calculations, and explicit hypotheses. It does not mean claiming priority over all existing research or presenting simulated outcomes as discoveries. The book identifies the authors of the causal studies it discusses. Its own quantitative contribution consists of reproducible growth accounting, descriptive model fitting, forecast diagnostics, sensitivity analysis, and conditional scenarios.

The prospective chapters examine the period to 2035. They do not claim to know the future. Artificial intelligence, competition, regulation, and changing social habits can alter both the scale and the function of the platform. The scenarios make assumptions visible so that readers can challenge them. Their purpose is to improve judgment about mechanisms and preparation, not to supply a false certainty.

The book can be read continuously or by domain. The first five chapters establish the measurement and conceptual framework. The next five examine social relationships. Chapters eleven through fifteen address enterprises and economic value. Chapters sixteen through twenty examine politics and journalism. The country chapters compare institutional settings. The final chapters develop the forward view. Methods, data tables, and references make the evidence inspectable.

The governing question throughout is practical: does a change in digital coordination increase people's ability to pursue their

own purposes, and do they retain meaningful alternatives afterward? That question is more demanding than counting engagement. It is also a better standard for evaluating a technology that has become part of the ordinary organization of modern life.

How to read the evidence

Figures labeled Observed reproduce public data at their stated scope. Calculated figures apply arithmetic to those observations. Fitted descriptive models summarize the supplied series without claiming causal identification. Out-of-sample and rolling diagnostics compare predictions with later observations. Illustrative scenarios and mechanisms use stated assumptions and must not be quoted as measured outcomes.

Source identifiers in brackets correspond to the reference ledger. F identifies company financial and activity reporting, P identifies Pew surveys, N and C identify Reuters Institute aggregate and country reports, R identifies research studies, G identifies institutional and policy sources, U identifies Ofcom, and E identifies Eurostat. A range such as F12-F23 refers to the annual sources across that interval.

Facebook, Meta's Family of Apps, and the consolidated company are kept separate. Facebook-specific public activity reporting ends in the assembled series in 2023. Family DAP continues afterward but is not appended to Facebook MAU or DAU. Revenue is consolidated and nominal unless explicitly stated otherwise.

Quarterly 2026 figures are not presented as full-year results.

The 2025 country table is a selected common benchmark, not a claim that no newer national evidence exists. The 2026 aggregate news figures use their own sample scope. Survey measures of ever using a platform differ from metered reach, daily use, news use, and advertising audience estimates. These definitions determine which comparisons are meaningful.

The accompanying research archive contains inputs, results, source links, manuscript text, and calculation scripts. It contains

no confidential platform microdata and no newly estimated causal country panel. Proposed research designs are identified as proposals. This separation allows readers to reproduce the numerical work and evaluate the broader interpretation on its actual evidentiary basis.

PART I

The infrastructure behind the screen

CHAPTER 1

The society inside the platform

A person opens Facebook to find a used chair, check a neighborhood notice, congratulate a relative, or see whether a local shop is still open. None of these actions looks like a major institutional transformation. Taken together, they reveal one. Activities once distributed among newspapers, telephone calls, shop windows, clubs, family albums, and political meetings now pass through a common interface. The transformation is less visible than a new factory or highway because the infrastructure is encountered as a sequence of ordinary choices.

The central argument of this book is that Facebook changed the cost and control of social coordination. It made finding people, maintaining weak relationships, assembling audiences, and circulating messages cheaper. It also concentrated the rules governing these activities inside a privately operated system. The same innovation that enlarged access made many organizations dependent on a distributor whose objectives were only partly aligned with their own. This dual movement explains more than either a celebration of connectivity or a theory of universal manipulation.

Coordination means more than communication. A message has an audience, a context, an expected response, and a consequence. A parent who learns about a school closure can rearrange a workday. A small manufacturer can locate a buyer outside its town. A political organizer can discover that a grievance is shared. The economic value appears when information changes a feasible action. Counting messages or minutes misses this conversion from communication to capability.

The book studies that conversion across three domains: social relationships, enterprises, and politics. Its Western core consists of

the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, and a Finnish comparison. These are selected cases, not a claim that nine countries exhaust the West. Their institutions differ enough to test whether a common platform produces a common society. The answer developed here is that it does not. Existing institutions shape the meaning and consequences of digital exposure.

The historical window begins in 2004 and ends at the information cutoff of October 29, 2026. This is twenty-two elapsed years, not twenty-two complete annual observations for every variable. The financial series is strongest from 2010, Facebook-specific activity is followed from 2012 through its last comparable public reports in 2023, and surveys cover their actual observation years. Missing values are not manufactured to make a complete-looking curve. The prospective chapters extend to 2035 through explicit scenarios rather than claimed foresight.

A more precise question

Asking whether Facebook is good or bad compresses incompatible outcomes into a single judgment. It can increase access to practical information while weakening the organizations that produce verified news. It can help an isolated adult maintain relationships while making social comparison more intrusive for another user. It can lower advertising entry costs while increasing dependence on an auction. These effects do not cancel each other automatically, because different people receive the benefits and bear the costs.

A useful assessment therefore asks who gains which capability, who loses which alternative, and who controls the conditions of exchange. A free account can yield a valuable service without eliminating a bargaining problem. A profitable platform can create substantial consumer benefits without making its profit a measure of social welfare. A controversial political message can be influential without changing an election. Precision about outcomes protects the analysis from arguments that appear persuasive only because they switch definitions midway.

Consider a hypothetical local association. Before social networking, it spends time collecting addresses, telephoning members, and printing notices. A Facebook group reduces these costs. Membership rises because joining becomes easy. Yet attendance may not rise proportionately, and the group may lose the ability to contact members when its page is restricted. The association has gained operational efficiency and acquired a new vulnerability. Neither can be inferred from the membership count alone.

This example motivates the book's original analytical distinction between access, conversion, and dependence. Access measures who can be reached. Conversion measures how reach becomes a useful action. Dependence measures the cost of losing the channel. These are proposed analytical dimensions, not a previously validated composite index. The distinction is valuable precisely because it does not pretend that one number can settle every question.

An argument that can be challenged

The book does not claim to be the first work on Facebook, to have discovered an unreported causal effect, or to possess confidential platform data. Its contribution lies in combining verified long-run observations with reproducible calculations and a coherent interpretation of institutional change. Where a causal result belongs to an existing study, that study is named. Where a mechanism is proposed here, it is presented as an argument. Where a curve uses assumed coefficients, the figure says so.

This discipline leaves room for strong conclusions. Facebook became consequential because it joined several coordination functions in one place. Its relevance cannot be inferred only from youth fashion or only from corporate earnings. Its political consequences cannot be summarized by a universal persuasion coefficient. Its future depends on whether artificial intelligence makes useful interaction easier or makes attention increasingly disconnected from relationships and accountable institutions.

The chapters proceed from measurement to mechanisms, from mechanisms to country differences, and from those differences to future possibilities. The sequence matters. An attractive graph is not an explanation until its denominator is understood. A plausible mechanism is not a measured impact until a credible comparison exists. A forecast is not informative until its assumptions can be changed. The aim is to make the reader able to question the analysis, not merely to be impressed by it.

END OF THE FREE EXCERPT

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