

# ***„Digital Sustainability“: Negotiating Sustainability in Digital Society***

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## ***Basic Idea of the Paper***

- Background: Sociology / science & technology studies (STS) of digitization...
- ...brought together with the notion of sustainability:

 **WHAT DOES „DIGITAL SUSTAINABILITY“ MEAN? [What is to be taken into account, considered, researched, investigated ... etc.?)**



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### **Line of Reasoning:**

- **Premises (Sustainability, Ontological Politics, the Digital)**
- **Dimensions of „Digital Sustainability“ (Nature, Society, the Digital)**
- **The Logic of Contemporary Digital Society (according to Zuboff)**
- **Lessons learned**



## ***Premises***

- **Ontological Politics I: What we know of the world AND what the world consists of (even its building blocks) is subject to (social, historical etc.) change (example: no microbes in France known NOR existent in France before Pasteurization of France; see Latour 1988)**
- **Sustainability: Reproducing potential to render forms of life durable**
- **Ontological Politics II: The leeway regarding what reality makes ontology a matter of politics, for the way life-styles co-create/bind nature are negotiable**
- **The Digital: The negotiation of ontology and sustainability nowadays against the background of a thoroughly digitized and datafied society  
= far-reaching observability of the social**

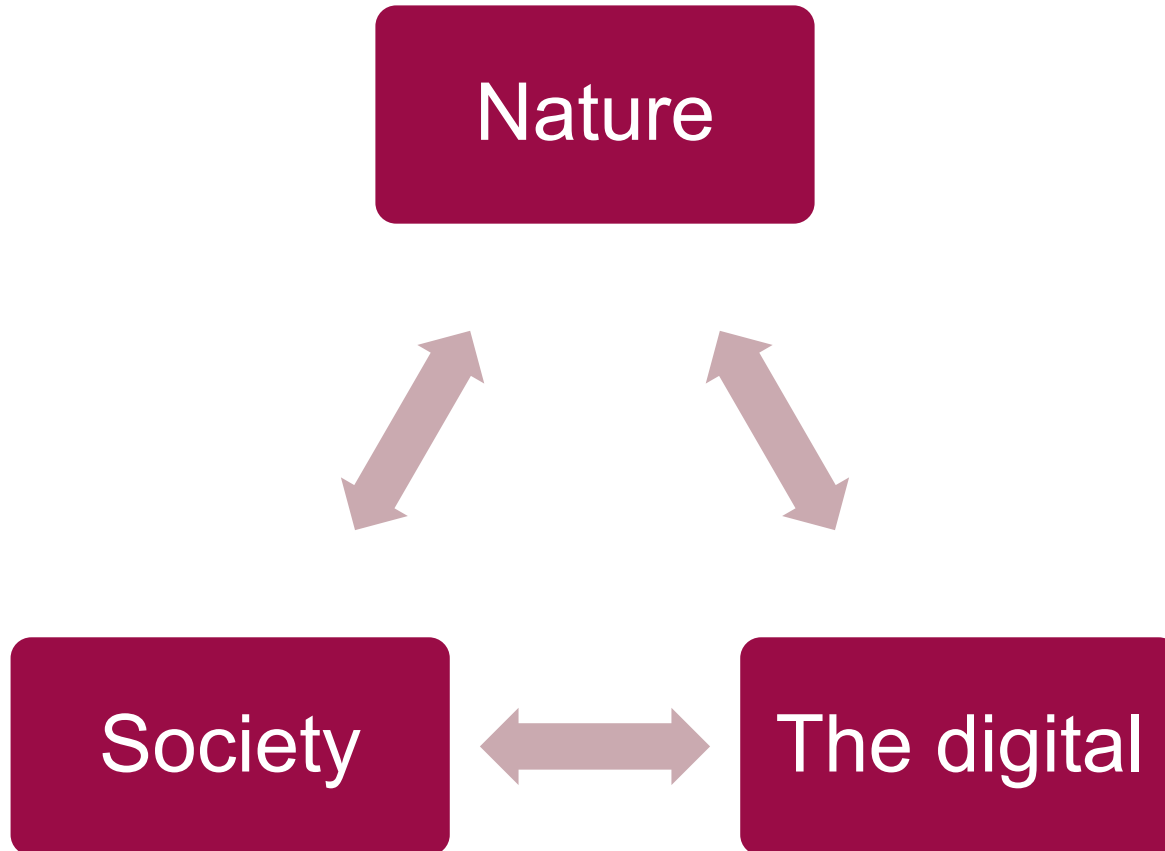


## ***Dimensions of „Digital Sustainability“***

- **Nature: The focus of discussions on sustainability. Role of the digital here:**
  - **Rescuing party (e.g. AI traffic management system to reduce the number of traffic jams and thus minimize resource consumption)**
  - **Threat (e.g. excessive energy wasting sending and storing of digital images, stickers, jike messages and so on)**
  
- **Society:**
  - **The digital as facilitator of inclusive public sphere / democratic society**
  - **The digital as facilitator of manipulation, disinformation, radicalization**
  
- **The digital:**
  - **Public maintenance of digital skills & infrastructures**
  - **Economic maintenance of digital skills & infrastructures**



## Dimensions of „Digital Sustainability“



## ***The Logic of Contemporary Digital Society (According to Zuboff)***

### **Elements of „The Age of Surveillance Capitalism“**

- predicting users' features, preferences, desires as business model
- „extraction imperative“: collecting & processing ever more data
- „prediction products“ traded on „behavioural futures markets“
- prediction to prescription = radicalization of the data economy's product: the potential to shape the behavior of people according to the objectives of those who pay for this behavior shaping potential
- spread of predictive/prescriptive logic to other social areas



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**A chance for sustainability? Yes, we can – automatize green behavior!**

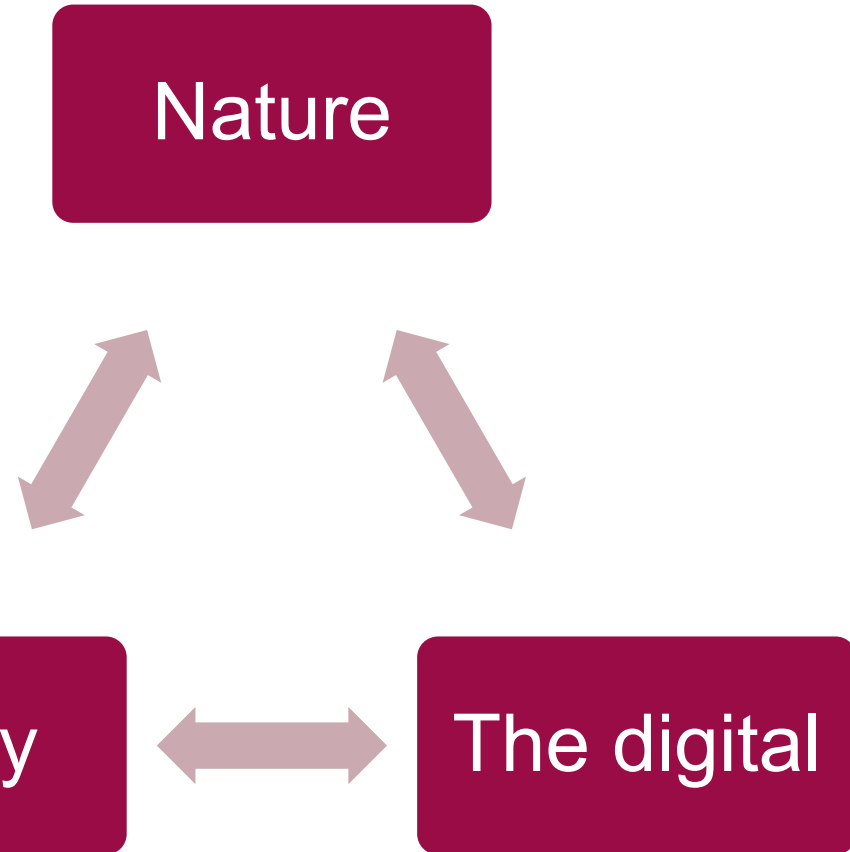
**...but then: Predictive logic blows up sustainability of democracy**





## Lessons to be Learned

- Permeability between layers
- mutual benefit and insights translatable between sustainability and digitality
- The digital layer might learn from sustainability discourse!



### Questions for future research

1. How to re-invent the notion of sustainability in theory and practice when combining it with insights from digitization research?
2. How to re-invent the further development of digitization by feeding in insights from sustainability discourse?

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION!!!**

