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P1: AI, Society, Governance, Education & Working Life

7. AI Risk and Lost Futures: Parliamentary Discourses of Manipulation, Governance, and Democratic Possibility

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Abstract: This paper examines how AI-related manipulation is problematised in Swedish parliamentary-institutional discourse. While research on political bots, computational propaganda, and AI-enabled disinformation has demonstrated how digital technologies can shape political communication, less attention has been paid to how such phenomena are articulated within institutional political settings. The paper addresses this gap by analysing how AI-related manipulation is rendered meaningful as a political problem, how responsibility is allocated, and what forms of response are made thinkable and legitimate.

The study draws on 237 validated passages from 174 Swedish parliamentary documents published between 1990 and 2026. Using a critical discourse analytical approach, it examines patterns of framing, agency, modality, nomination, responsibility, and proposed intervention.

The analysis identifies three recurring problematisations. First, AI-related manipulation is constructed as a democratic risk object, linked to disinformation, synthetic content, deepfakes, electoral manipulation, and declining trust in the information environment. Second, it is articulated as a security and geopolitical threat, associated with hybrid threats, influence operations, hostile actors, psychological defence, and state preparedness. Third, it is framed as a problem of media literacy and societal resilience, where citizens, schools, public agencies, and institutions are positioned as responsible for strengthening interpretive capacity and resistance to manipulation.

The paper argues that the central analytical issue is not simply that AI-related manipulation is framed in terms of risk, but how different risk framings organise political responsibility and institutional response. Democratic risk foregrounds electoral integrity and platform governance; security risk foregrounds state preparedness and geopolitical antagonism; literacy and resilience framings foreground education, civic competence, and public agencies. The analysis further suggests that parliamentary-institutional discourse is rich in problem formulations but comparatively less developed in articulating alternative democratic futures for AI. A critical implication is that AI-related harms may become governable without AI itself becoming democratically contestable. The paper therefore contributes to humanities and social science perspectives on AI by showing how AI-related manipulation is transformed into an object of regulation, resilience, and preparedness, while raising the broader question of whether democratic societies can still decide what AI should be for, rather than merely adapt to the risks it produces.