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EDITORIAL

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Digital Resilience Within a Hypermediated Polycrisis

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Abstract

This thematic issue examines digital resilience within an increasingly complex landscape of hypermediated, overlapping crises. Situated at the intersection of several research areas—including digital literacy, platform studies, Indigenous media studies, journalism studies, and political science—the thematic issue explores the complexities of digital resilience and seeks to advance its conceptualization and understanding. The issue brings together 15 articles spanning more than 17 countries and addressing a wide range of digital resilience phenomena, from Bangladeshi women's responses to disinformation and online harassment, to community-led technologies countering environmental injustices in Brazil, to the navigation of digital surveillance in later life in Spain. Together, this issue offers an interdisciplinary, multimethod, and global approach that highlights both the opportunities and challenges involved in fostering digital resilience. In the context of a hypermediated polycrisis, critically assessing how digital resilience can empower people to confront digital threats is especially urgent, particularly for marginalized populations in both the Global North and the Global South.

Keywords

digital literacy; digital society; digital resilience; hypermediatization; social media; polycrisis

1. Hypermediated Polycrisis

The concept of polycrisis refers to the convergence of multiple crises—e.g., environmental, economic, health-related, or informational—that occur simultaneously and interact in ways that amplify their overall impact. Morin and Kern (1999, p. 74) first introduced the term in *Homeland Earth*, where they argued that the "complex intersolidarity of problems, antagonisms, crises, uncontrolled processes, and the general crisis of the planet" constitutes the most pressing challenge confronting humanity. Later, scholars expanded on

this idea. Swilling (2013) characterized a polycrisis as a set of closely connected social, economic, ecological, and institutional crises that cannot be explained by one cause alone, while Tooze (2022) emphasized that these crises intensify through their interaction with one another rather than unfolding separately. As this thematic issue demonstrates, there is growing evidence that humanity is confronting the dynamics of a polycrisis. This polycrisis is unfolding within a unique socio-technological context of hyperconnectivity (Quan-Haase & Wellman, 2005)—one in which digital media, and online communication networks in particular, structure how crises are encountered, understood, and responded to in everyday life.

This socio-technical context is closely tied to the emergence of the "digital society" (Castells, 2024), which reflects a social structure organized around digital information and communication networks where connectivity and information flows have become central to social organization. Building on this perspective, Rainie and Wellman (2012) argue that networked digital infrastructures have given rise to a new social operating system characterized by perpetual connectivity, enabled by the always-on nature of mobile devices. This intensified mediated interconnectedness underpins what media and communication scholar Andreas Hepp (2020) calls "hypermediatization": A social condition in which digital media function not merely as channels of communication but as pervasive and interwoven environments shaping social relations, institutions, and everyday life.

Within such a hypermediated society, informational flows are deeply entangled with other dimensions of the polycrisis. Focusing on these entanglements, the articles in this thematic issue examine key mediated phenomena (e.g., misinformation, harassment, or surveillance) with the aim of deepening understanding and contributing to the development of digital resilience in the face of current overlapping and compounding crises.

2. Digital Resilience

Although resilience has been defined and operationalized across multiple disciplines, from Holling's (1973) ecological formulation to Bonanno's (2004) psychological conceptualization and Folke's (2006) socio-ecological perspective, a common denominator in these definitions is the capacity of systems, individuals, or communities to anticipate, absorb, adapt to, and transform in response to adversity, disruption, or change (Davoudi, 2012). From this perspective, resilience is not a fixed trait but rather a dynamic process shaped by ongoing learning and adjustment (Luthar et al., 2000).

Within the digital domain, resilience has received comparatively little scholarly attention and remains an underdeveloped field of inquiry. Although the literature on digital resilience is nascent and fragmented, it generally revolves around three cross-cutting themes: (a) digital literacy skills, (b) social capital and networks, and (c) adaptive capacities. Research on digital literacy examines how individuals and societies manage online risks such as misinformation, harassment, and privacy threats, emphasizing critical and reflective competencies as key resources for resilience (e.g., Livingstone et al., 2017; Mihailidis, 2018). At the micro level of the individual, resilience is reflected in experiences such as awareness of misinformation, exposure, and sharing behaviors (e.g., Boulianne & Lee, 2022), while at the macro level of society, it has been conceptualized as a nation's collective capacity to withstand the impacts of misinformation (Humprecht et al., 2020).

While this body of work has shed light on both macro-level determinants and micro-level individual experiences, it insufficiently captures how resilience is cultivated through collective practices, social networks, and cultural contexts. This gap has prompted scholars to shift attention toward the collective dimension of digital resilience, particularly the mobilization of social resources such as social capital within online networks. From that perspective, resilience emerges not only from institutions or individual competencies but also from relational processes such as trust, mutual support, and shared meaning-making enacted through digital platforms. Concepts such as Tomkova's (2020) digital social resilience, alongside studies of digitally mediated social support and collective action during the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g., Esteve-Del-Valle et al., 2022; Qin et al., 2022), highlight digital resilience as a socially embedded and collectively-produced process.

A parallel strand of research has examined resilience in relation to organizational and institutional responses to digital disruptions such as cyberattacks, system failures, and infrastructural breakdowns (e.g., Park et al., 2015). Within this literature, cyber resilience frameworks emphasize an organization's capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from digitally-mediated threats (e.g., Kohn, 2023).

This brief overview of the literature highlights several cross-cutting themes in the field and serves to frame the contributions in this thematic issue, which, as the reader will see, primarily engage with the first (digital literacy skills) and second (social resources like social capital) research themes.

3. Digital Resilience in a Hypermediated Polycrisis

This thematic issue brings together articles that advance both the conceptualization and the empirical investigation of digital resilience across global contexts. It opens with four articles that explore the relationship between digital resilience and digital literacy from complementary perspectives. Pasitselska and Neag (2026) introduce the H.E.L.P. framework—habit, escapism, listening, and participation—which conceptualizes media literacy as a form of digital resilience in contexts marked by war, migration, famine, climate catastrophe, and other forms of adversity. Focusing on professional intermediaries, Carrillo et al. (2026) examine the preparedness, knowledge, and attitudes of Spanish librarians toward disinformation and the role of media and information literacy. Extending this analysis to a broader comparative context, Boulianne (2026) investigates digital resilience across four countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Canada—and across different age groups, drawing on survey data from 6,000 respondents collected at the height of overlapping crises in February 2021. Relatedly, Távora and Melo (2026) offer an in-depth account of how rural Traditional Peoples and Communities in Brazil have developed forms of digital resilience in response to the previous far-right federal government's mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic—an approach characterized by science denialism and the active spread of disinformation.

The thematic issue then turns to three articles that focus on a specific digital threat: online mis- and disinformation. Shuchy and Uddin (2026) draw on semi-structured interviews with 25 Bangladeshi activists to examine how gendered disinformation and online harassment targeted women activists in the aftermath of the July–August 2024 mass uprising in Bangladesh, as well as how these activists responded to such attacks. Their study shows how vigilantism and misogyny, amplified by platform algorithms, transformed Facebook and Telegram into hypermediated battlegrounds. Similarly, Luthfia and Angeline (2026) examine how Indonesia's distinctive combination of local cultural values and community-based movements

contributes to strengthening digital resilience against mis- and disinformation. Finally, Kont et al. (2026) explore the comparatively underexamined relationship between misinformation and emotions, focusing on how and under what conditions emotional responses shape reactions to disinformation. Based on 29 semi-structured interviews with young adults in Germany and the Netherlands, this study identifies the emotions elicited when individuals encounter potential disinformation and examines how these emotional dynamics influence the development of digital resilience.

From there, this thematic issue then engages with the still underexplored relationship between digital resilience and platformization (van Dijck et al., 2018) with four articles focusing on censorship, immigration, digital detox practices, and adolescence. Zhang and Quan-Haase (2026) investigate feminist experiences of censorship across Weibo and Zhihu using 19 semi-structured interviews. Their study contributes to rethinking digital resilience as not only resistance to censorship, but as an adaptive capacity to maintain agency and continuity in activism. Moving into a different digital space, Hollingshead et al. (2026) examine the platform logics shaping migration-related content on TikTok in the Canadian context. Turning to practices of digital disconnection, Ľudviková and Gabdulhakov (2026) adopt a netnographic approach to study The Offline Club, a Netherlands-based initiative offering curated digital detox events. Their analysis investigates how digital disconnection is collectively experienced within a platformized environment. Finally, drawing on longitudinal, multi-method qualitative data from Chinese adolescents who entered puberty during the Covid-19 pandemic, Dong (2026) examines how digital resilience is enacted through everyday media practices amidst hypermediated and volatile digital environments.

This issue goes on to present two studies that examine the political and journalistic dimensions of participatory budgeting as a digitally-mediated democratic practice. Peiruza-Parga et al. (2026) track participatory budgeting processes, between 2016 and 2024, across 90 municipalities in Catalonia using the Decidim platform in order to analyze the political factors shaping the resilience of participatory budgeting initiatives deployed through digital infrastructures. Complementing this perspective, Spyridou (2026) draws on 90 semi-structured interviews with journalists in seven European countries—Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Poland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Ireland—to examine journalistic perceptions of participatory budgeting as a mechanism to rebuild trust.

Finally, the issue explores how individuals build resilience against digital threats in Spain and China. Suárez-Gonzalo et al. (2026) analyze responses to an online survey (N = 505) conducted in late 2023 on perceptions and practices related to digital surveillance. Their study identifies the determinants of identity masking and data protection practices, interpreted as forms of resilience to digital surveillance among older internet users in Spain. Similarly, Duan and He (2026) investigate how elderly Chinese citizens (aged 50 and above) encounter, interpret, and respond to disinformation in their study, based on 35 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in Beijing.

Taken together, these contributions highlight the context-dependent, multidimensional, and socially embedded nature of digital resilience, demonstrating how it is shaped by political structures, platform dynamics, literacy practices, and the everyday negotiation of digital threats.

Informed by the articles in this thematic issue, we propose the following research directions as key guidelines for future studies on digital resilience:

1) Digital resilience as a protective factor: Digital resilience in the form of media literacy, AI literacy, or digital literacy can function as a protective factor to guard against the impact that crises can have, mitigating the effects of environmental, political, or health crises as well as mis- and disinformation. Research can help uncover and understand such protection mechanisms.
2) Digital resilience as an adaptive mechanism: Digital resilience can develop over time as a mechanism to counter crises and sustain activism, normalization, and well-being. A better understanding of the learning and adaptive mechanisms is needed.
3) Digital resilience as an outcome: Digital resilience can be a positive outcome of crises when new adaptive behaviors are learnt and further internalized. Research can help detect and conceptualize such adaptive behaviors.
4) Levels of digital resilience: The study of digital resilience can occur at individual, group, organizational, community, or societal levels. Research needs to capture digital resilience at each of these levels and examine how they influence each other.
5) Digital resilience and inequality: Research on digital resilience needs to include measures of inequality, as oftentimes, marginalized groups are particularly vulnerable to crises and digital threats.

All in all, the global scope of this thematic issue underscores building resilience against digital threats as a societal concern in both the Global North and Global South. The articles in this collection also show that marginalized groups—including women, Traditional Peoples and Communities, and individuals with low levels of media literacy—are disproportionately targeted by digital threats, thereby reproducing and further exacerbating existing inequalities.

Despite the many contributions, we acknowledge that this thematic issue has limitations in its coverage of several aspects that are central to understanding the hypermediated polycrisis. Most articles, for example, focus on specific dimensions of the informational crisis and further research could more fully explore how these intersect with other types of crisis. In addition, the strong emphasis on mis- and disinformation risks narrowing digital resilience to a single category of digital threat, when in practice the concept is broader. Finally, the production of knowledge on digital resilience remains largely centered in Global North universities, reinforcing disparities with knowledge from other regions, particularly in the development and implementation of empirically-grounded resilience-building programs.

Future research can build on the insights offered in this thematic issue and contribute to the further conceptualization and empirical assessment of digital resilience in a world characterized by overlapping and hypermediated crises.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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