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From mutual recognition to metrics: how a laboring logic reconfigures platform-mediated communication

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Abstract. Datafied platforms repeatedly push the conditions for being seen, being responded to, and being recognized toward metric thresholds. These thresholds take the form of popularity, rank, ratings, and risk scores. Existing critiques describe the direction of the shift, but they rarely specify the operations that make it repeatable inside platforms. This article uses a laboring logic as the overarching explanation and proposes a mechanism framework organized around an entry-reach-evaluation loop. At entry, expression is rendered as discrete, trackable events ("eventized") and logged as signals. At reach, these signals are rewritten into tunable visibility allocations. At evaluation, outcomes are fixed into inheritable weights, labels, and thresholds, then fed back into distribution. As a result, mutual recognition more often appears as metric payoffs (visibility rewards and weight changes), while reason exchange is institutionally compressed. The contribution is explanatory. It specifies a minimal mechanism coordinate for comparing how platforms turn standing into thresholds. Its scope centers on large datafied platforms where recommendation ranking and model-based governance are dominant. The framework can also be transferred to other digitized organizational settings where visibility quotas and ratings or risk thresholds allocate opportunities.

Keywords: platform-mediated communication, recognition crisis, metrics, laboring logic

1. Introduction

A structural shift in platform-mediated communication is that recognition increasingly has to pass through metric thresholds. This shift repeatedly produces damage to relational standing across platforms. Platforms add channels, but they embed everyday communication in settings that are computable and auditable [1]. Recognition that once relied on responses, understanding, and respect is now presented and managed through metrics like popularity, exposure, engagement rates, ratings, and labels. Recognition is increasingly delivered as visibility rewards and weight changes. Meanwhile, reason exchange and understanding-based responses are easier to downgrade at the institutional level [1]. This drift of recognition conditions toward computable thresholds is not an accidental design choice by one platform. It is a result of platformized infrastructure and algorithmic governance rewriting visibility and behavioral traces in large-scale distribution [2, 3].

Existing critiques identify the direction of change, but they rarely locate where platform operations produce it. Even when they name instrumental rationality or accumulation drives, they often stop short of explaining

how interfaces, ranking, and evaluation apparatuses jointly stabilize recognition as metrics. Critical theory can track the macro trend of expanding instrumental rationality. Political economy can explain the accumulation drive behind data commodification and attention monetization. But once the target becomes more specific, meaning how recognition is stabilized as metrics and reproduced inside platforms, these approaches often remain descriptive. They do not land on the process structure of interface design, distribution, and evaluation apparatuses. For that reason, we still lack an explanatory framework that moves macro pathologies and accumulation drives down to platform mechanisms.

Philosophically, we argue that platform metricization does not merely measure recognition; it re-specifies what counts as being recognized by relocating standing from reasons exchanged in interaction to statuses produced by apparatus discretion.

The mechanism question is therefore simple to state but hard to answer. In datafied platforms, why does recognition become stably dependent on quantified thresholds, and why does this dependence harden into a repeatable process. We argue that the key is not a general moral decline in subjects. It is a laboring logic that forms when platforms fold communication into circuits of value realization. Communication is continuously organized so that it can be measured, optimized, and rendered into auditable records for accounting and governance. Metrics then become the default language through which recognition can occur and be confirmed.

Alternative explanations capture important parts of the story, but they still do not explain why recognition becomes stably dependent on quantified thresholds in a reproducible process form. A compliance-centered account rightly foregrounds regulatory risk and moderation duties [4], yet compliance pressure alone does not logically force platforms to treat visibility as quota-like opportunities [5], nor does it by itself require evaluative judgments to persist as inheritable statuses that travel across time and contexts [6]. An attention-competition account explains why platforms optimize for engagement and why amplification dynamics can lock in (and even intensify) certain outcomes [7-9], yet competition by itself does not necessitate the specific coupling of entry logging, reach modulation, and threshold-based evaluation that makes recognition conditions portable and durable. A technological-necessity account notes that large-scale distribution relies on ranking and automation, yet "scaling" can be built under different normative constraints and institutional designs [10], and therefore does not predetermine that standing must be settled into reusable labels and weights [2]. What the laboring logic hypothesis adds is a mechanism-level claim about why this particular coupling is attractive and repeatable: once communicative activity is folded into circuits of value realization and auditable governance, platforms are pushed to format expression as collectible, recordable events, to handle visibility as an allocable resource for optimization, and to settle outcomes into callable, inheritable thresholds that can be re-used in later allocation—so that metrics-dependent recognition is reproduced through feedback rather than appearing as a one-off side effect [11-13].

We offer a mechanism framework that locates where recognition conditions are pushed outward by tracing an entry–reach–evaluation loop. This loop serves as the framework's minimal mechanism coordinate. Entry formats expression into recordable signals, reach allocates visibility through ranking and modulation, and evaluation stabilizes outcomes as reusable weights, labels, or thresholds that feed back into later distribution.

The normative claim is modest. If discretion allocates visibility and opportunity, affected agents must remain participants who can demand reasons and trigger correction. A subject should be treated as a participant who can ask for reasons, question discretion, and seek correction through appeals and error fixing. For that reason, the normative conclusion is not a checklist of good governance. It is a standing-based inference. Once recognition opportunities are in fact allocated through discretionary metric thresholds, treating agents as participants requires a minimal set of procedural conditions that makes reason-demanding and error-correcting relations possible. The mechanism analysis that follows shows how the loop institutionalizes

recognition opportunities as reusable criteria. The conclusion then translates this structural result into minimal institutional constraints at the three sites.

Within this framework, recognition theory provides a test for when reification is at stake. When recognition opportunities are allocated through metric thresholds, the relational stance drifts from understanding and response toward calculation and scheduling. Recognition is then forced to appear as visibility rewards and weight changes. Critiques of digital labor explain why this test meets stubborn real-world drivers. Value recovery and governance at scale require communication to be organized as measurable processes that are amenable to accounting and optimization. Metrics then gain institutional priority in both business and governance structures, and they are reproduced over time. We use mechanism decomposition and conceptual analysis to translate macro pathology and accumulation drives into a comparable process structure. On that basis, we narrow the normative meaning to minimal procedural conditions at the three sites. This gives a defensible formulation for later debates on governance boundaries.

A scope note is necessary. The argument targets large datafied platforms where ranking-based distribution and model-based governance routinely shape communicative opportunities. Where visibility is not systematically allocated through ranking, or where evaluative outcomes do not persist as statuses that shape later opportunities, the framework supports a weaker claim in which metrics assist recognition rather than condition it.

To avoid a trivial reading that platforms simply have rankings or moderation, we treat the offloading of recognition conditions as a locatable mechanism claim that can be compared across platforms. We then tie it tightly to coupling and feedback across the three sites of entry, reach, and evaluation. It compares platforms in a shared coordinate system. The comparison tracks differences in how strongly entry logs expression as discrete events, how reach distributes visibility in a quota-like way, and how evaluation sets inheritable thresholds. As a comparative use, we later distinguish stronger and weaker loops through three conditions, quota-like distribution at reach, inheritable evaluation outcomes, and feedback-based reproduction. These conditions also explain why recognition damage takes different forms across platforms.

To make that claim testable, we first fix what "metrics-dependent recognition" means, then show why laboring logic makes the loop self-reproducing, and finally derive a procedural floor at each site.

2. Problem framing and conceptual boundaries: how recognition becomes metrics-dependent

Across platform communication, recognition is increasingly routed through metric thresholds, and the pattern is institutional rather than episodic. Platforms admit expression as trackable inputs, allocate visibility as a managed resource, and turn outcomes into statuses that travel. The rest of this section tightens the concepts we rely on, shows why macro critique and political economy often stop short at the level of direction or drivers, and then introduces entry-reach-evaluation as the coordinate that lets us locate the relevant operations.

2.1. Defining the phenomenon and setting conceptual boundaries

A recognition crisis in platformized communication is not an occasional decline in attitudes. It is a structural bias that can be observed repeatedly. Relational standing is increasingly confirmed through reusable signals such as exposure, interactions, ratings, and labels. Relationships become more dependent on sustained reach, while the conditions of reach are not jointly controlled by communicating subjects. Value judgments lean more on outcome apparatuses such as profiling and risk categories, rather than on reason exchange within dialogue.

In this article, recognition refers to the expected chance of being taken seriously, receiving responses, and receiving reasonable evaluation in public and social communication. This minimal definition is meant to capture a shared form of damaged recognition in platform contexts. It is not a full reconstruction of the recognition tradition. Metrics refer to signal systems that translate communicative outcomes into numbers or labels that are comparable, inheritable, and repeatedly reusable. These systems then shape later reach and opportunity allocation [1].

Recognition persists, but it increasingly has to clear metric thresholds to take effect. Here metrics work as a broader apparatus of commensuration. They compress heterogeneous judgments into a comparable scale. In doing so, they reshape the social relation of what counts as a reason and what counts as value [14]. In platform settings metrics are not one-off measurements. They are written into inheritable records for accounts and content. Systems can call them again in later distribution and risk control. On platforms, comparability typically travels with reuse. What can be measured can be stored, called, and applied again. It shifts evaluation of persons from reason exchange in the present to a status that travels across time. This is the conceptual base for how evaluation is turned into thresholds and feedback that we analyze later [15, 16].

Here "laboring logic" names the explanatory principle: platforms reorganize communicative relations so that valuation and governance can operate through a single metric form. "Metricization" refers to the lived consequence of this reorganization. Communicative standing is increasingly mediated by exposure, rank, ratings, and labels rather than by reasons exchanged in interaction.

To avoid overreach, we distinguish a strong from a weak version of the claim. The strong sense applies only when three conditions coincide. Reach is systematically allocated through ranking and modulation, so visibility functions as a rationed opportunity. Evaluation outcomes persist as reusable statuses such as weights, labels, and thresholds, and these statuses condition later opportunities. Feedback across entry, reach, and evaluation reproduces these conditions over time. When any of these conditions is missing, the weaker sense applies: metrics may still assist recognition claims, but they do not become the dominant criterion through which standing is stabilized.

With these boundaries set, the problem becomes a mechanism problem: why does this metric bias recur across platforms, and how does it harden into a process form of entry measurement, visibility choreography, and feedback-based scoring. The mechanism question is therefore precise. Which platform operations turn standing into a reusable threshold, and how does feedback keep that threshold in place?

2.2. Where macro and structural accounts break down: the problem of locating process sites

Macro diagnosis identifies a direction of pathology, but it does not locate where the causal work is done in platforms. In the critical theory tradition associated with Habermas, modern societies are said to face colonization of the lifeworld by system media such as money and power [17]. This diagnosis captures key tendencies in platformized societies. Instrumental rationality expands. Public discussion drifts toward utility. Meaning can thin out. Yet once the explanatory target becomes more specific, meaning how recognition is reproduced as metrics inside platforms, the framework faces a methodological gap. The system and lifeworld distinction can name a direction. It rarely pinpoints where causes operate inside platforms. It can also obscure the mediating structures that do the work here. Interfaces format expression. Recommendation routes

[1] In this context, metrics include engagement measures such as popularity, interaction, and dwell time. They also include governance measures such as credibility weights, risk scores, and compliance labels. Together they form threshold systems that are inheritable and that operate through feedback.

attention. Model-based evaluation produces traceable scores and labels. These outputs then shape later interaction.

Normative diagnosis supplies a language for what is damaged. It still needs to move down to process. Honneth's recognition theory offers a finer normative grammar. Recognition is not optional affect. It is a condition for subject formation, social integration, and moral relations [18]. When recognition is forgotten or obscured, a social pathology of reification can emerge [19]. In that line of argument, reification is understood as a forgetting of prior recognition. In practice, one treats the other as an object and treats the relation as something operable rather than a relation of mutual recognition. This gives a test for when reification is at stake. Yet in platform settings one more step is required. Recognition is not mainly obscured through explicit coldness. It is offloaded through a metricized media structure. Preconditions for recognition are decided by allocations of visibility and by evaluation apparatuses. If we stop at the normative label of forgetting recognition, the key platform problem remains. We still need to show how this pathology is institutionalized and technically implemented. That means showing where recognition is rewritten into signals and labels, rather than only naming the damage.

Political economy can explain accumulation drivers. It still needs to show how those drivers are translated through platform mediation into lived process experiences. In Fuchs's analysis of digital labor on social media, users' time and activity generate data that can be commodified, and exploitation occurs in that process [11]. If political economy stays only at the level of capital logic, it can leave an experiential gap. Users do not usually experience the structure as "I am being exploited." They more often experience its outcomes as being downranked, throttled, labeled, scored, and made unseen [11]. So the task remains. We need to show how accumulation drivers travel through platform mediating structures and become specific process forms of visibility and evaluation.

Across these approaches, the missing piece is the same: an account of the specific operations that convert communicative standing into a portable metric. Recognition theory needs to be mechanism-ready, and political economy needs to be process-specific. To connect them in platform settings, we have to answer one question. How does a laboring logic take hold through platform mediation, and how does it reproduce metricized conditions through a feedback loop.

2.3. A mechanism coordinate: the entry-reach-evaluation loop

To locate process sites, we break platform-mediated communication into three sites, entry, reach, and evaluation [2]. The triad is minimal because each site performs a function that large-scale platform communication cannot omit. Entry renders expression into auditable records, reach allocates visibility through routable distribution, and evaluation stabilizes outcomes as reusable statuses that can condition later opportunities. These three functions recur across implementations and therefore provide a comparable mechanism coordinate.

These sites also work as a shared coordinate because each carries an institutional function that large-scale platform communication cannot avoid. Entry admits expression as a recordable object. Reach allocates attention and visibility as routable opportunities. Evaluation settles interaction outcomes into statuses that are inheritable and repeatedly reusable, including qualifications and risk states. Even if technical implementations vary, these functions recur in some form. That makes the triad both hard to omit and easy to compare. Cross-platform differences mainly show up in how strongly each site exercises discretion over visibility, how

[2] For brevity, we refer to this triadic analytic unit as the entry–reach–evaluation loop ("the loop"). Later references to "the loop" refer to this same unit.

strongly evaluation outcomes persist over time, and how much these outcomes feed back into later opportunities.

The loop matters because it moves both normative diagnosis and accumulation drivers down to three recognizable sites. It gives a comparable analytic coordinate [3].

This coordinate turns the recognition to metrics diagnosis into a concrete explanatory task. Section 3 shows why metrics become the privileged mediating form in the loop by linking a normative line (offloaded recognition conditions) with a generative line (value realization and governance at scale).

3. Theoretical integration: reification diagnosis and digital labor dynamics

Here we connect the normative diagnosis of damaged recognition to the forces that keep metricization in place, treating them as one mechanism chain. The bridging term is laboring logic. Once communication is folded into value recovery and auditable governance, expression is organized to be measurable and optimizable, and metrics become the default way recognition is granted and confirmed. Once platform communication is folded into a circuit of value recovery that is amenable to accounting and optimization, expression and interaction are more likely to be organized as measurable and optimizable processes. Metrics then gain institutional priority. They become the default language for whether communication can be seen and recognized. Recognition theory supplies a test for what counts as normative damage. Critiques of digital labor explain why the pattern keeps being reproduced.

3.1. Normative diagnosis: reification and the offloading of recognition conditions

Reification matters here because platforms relocate recognition conditions into computable thresholds. This shift forces an objectifying drift in relational stance. In Honneth's reconstruction, reification is not simple coldness or instrumental calculation. It is a forgetting of prior recognition. Practical subjects no longer meet others and the world in an engaged, participatory stance. They treat others and the relation as operable objects. The key is the stance through which one relates to the other [19]. Carried into platform settings, a recognition crisis can be read as this kind of offloading. Recognition no longer rests mainly on reason exchange and responsive understanding. It increasingly depends on reusable signals and thresholds, such as popularity, rank, ratings, and labels, that decide whether one is taken seriously. The result is a drift from understanding and response toward calculation and scheduling. The other appears as a profile or as interaction value. Recognition is distributed as visibility rewards and weight changes. We use reification here to make this normative damage legible as a diagnosable deformation of relations.

Once recognition opportunities are tied to inheritable weights and thresholds, responses are easier to treat as computable feedback. Explanation and error correction are easier to outsource to platform discretion rather than to intersubjective negotiation. Reason exchange is not rejected in value. It is demoted in institutional position. It becomes an add-on that comes after one has already passed the metric threshold. This point sets the normative direction for Section 4. There we will see that offloading takes place at the three sites of entry, reach, and evaluation, and that feedback hardens it over time.

Normative diagnosis answers why the shift is damaging. It does not by itself explain why metrics become so stubborn. So we need to turn to structures of value realization and show why metrics gain institutional priority and keep being reproduced on platforms.

[3] In this sense, the loop is a minimal analytic coordinate for locating process sites. It does not claim that platform operations literally unfold in only three steps.

3.2. Generative dynamics: data commodification and attention structure

By laboring logic we mean the way platforms fold communicative activity into value realization and auditable governance, and then organize it so it can be measured, optimized, and recorded for accounting. Communication is continuously rewritten into measurable metrics, optimizable targets, and settleable outcomes. It becomes a process that can be run as an operation. In this logic, data commodification provides an asset base for value recovery. Centralized allocation of visibility and attention provides a means for distribution and optimization. Platforms then gain structural influence over the conditions of communication. Metrics can more easily hold priority over time [20, 21]. Platform political economy often describes this as governance and valuation practices of data assetization or data capitalization. Platforms turn traceable footprints into measurable assets and use them to organize extraction and accumulation [12, 20, 21].

Metric competition in platformized communication is stubborn because communicative activity is absorbed into structures of capital accumulation and is then datafied and commodified. In Fuchs's analysis of digital labor on social media, users' communication, clicks, dwell time, and interactions generate data resources that can be aggregated, analyzed, and traded. They serve targeted advertising, profile prediction, and commercial optimization. The mechanism is straightforward. When value realization depends on computable behavioral traces, metrics become a low-cost language that links communicative practice to value recovery. That is why they gain institutional priority [11].

Critiques of digital labor thus provide a mechanism clue for why metricization becomes a dominant principle. Distribution optimization and value recovery run stably only when communication is rewritten into traces that are measurable and predictable. And platform business models remain viable only when those traces can be aggregated and turned into sellable attention and tradable data assets [11].

In this framework, metrics are not an evaluation that sits outside communication. They are a technical expression of labor organization and value realization. At entry, they require expression to be logged as discrete events that yield collectible signals. At reach, they require visibility to be tunable and allocable. At evaluation, they build thresholds into scoring and feed them back into distribution, so a metric order can become amenable to accounting and optimization and reproducible over time.

For this reason, the slide from recognition toward metric competition is a structural consequence of communication being reorganized inside accumulation structures. A laboring logic becomes concrete through the three-site loop. At entry, expression is eventized in order to supply measurable inputs. Reach turns visibility into a managed resource that serves optimization. Evaluation thresholdizes and feeds back, so a settleable and reproducible metric order can form.

What remains is to state the proposition that makes the normative diagnosis and the generative dynamics land on the same process claim.

3.3. Metrics as a mediating form: why they stabilize across the three sites

The proposition is that reification diagnosis and digital labor dynamics meet in the same place. Metrics are both an institutional form created by offloaded recognition conditions and a technical language required by value recovery. Setting the two traditions side by side lets "why it is damaged" and "why it is stubborn" connect on one mechanism chain [19]. Recognition theory explains why a relation becomes pathological when recognition has to pass through metric thresholds [19]. Critiques of digital labor explain why metrics gain stubborn reproduction forces inside structures of value realization [11]. The convergence point is that metrics are at once an institutional form of objectified relations and a technical language that pulls communication into measurable processes that are amenable to accounting and optimization.

Work on technological mediation helps clarify why metrics are not external measures but relations re-written through artifacts. Mediation reshapes the relation between subjects and others. It becomes a relation that is formatted, routed, and judged through apparatuses [22-24]. Mapped onto the three sites, the reconfiguration looks like this. At entry, expression is reworked into collectible events, so being responded to first becomes being counted. At reach, mutual visibility is reworked into quota-like opportunities, so being seen becomes a competitive resource. At evaluation, judgment of persons is reworked into inheritable thresholds, so being taken seriously becomes a reusable status. Because metrics reconfigure relations in this way, they can stabilize across the three sites and be fed back through the loop again and again.

Metricization takes stable forms at each site. At entry, expression is pre-cut into collectible events, so recognition is more easily pulled toward accumulating signal performance rather than toward understanding-based response. At reach, visibility is ordered and recommended as competitive opportunities, so recognition is more easily reshaped into a struggle over shares of exposure. At evaluation, scores, labels, and weights become inheritable thresholds and feed back into distribution. Recognition is then more likely to be experienced as persistent damage, such as being labeled and downranked. The next section explains how these three conversions are stabilized in institutional and technical arrangements, and how feedback keeps amplifying them.

4. Mechanism unfolding: feedback reproduction across entry, reach, and evaluation

This part moves the claim that recognition conditions are offloaded into metric thresholds down to the process structure of three sites inside platforms. It also shows how feedback reproduces the pattern. Expression is logged as events at entry into collectible signals. Reach converts signals into distributable visibility outcomes. Evaluation settles outcomes into inheritable weights, labels, and thresholds, and feeds them back into distribution. We unfold the three process sites in order, entry, reach, and evaluation, and then show how feedback ties them together.

4.1. Entry: rendering expression as collectible events

The entry site determines in what computable form expression is admitted by the system. Through interface templates and default settings, diverse expression is eventized into traces such as likes, reposts, comments, and dwell time. A simple illustration is enough to show the formatting power of entry. Cookie banners demonstrate how interface grammars and defaults change consent behavior at scale. Large-scale evidence shows that different interaction tools produce statistically significant differences in consent or refusal, and these differences further shape the number of subsequent tracking requests [25]. This suggests that button grammars and defaults at entry are not neutral. They pre-format behavior into signal inputs that are amenable to accounting and optimization. They provide measurable material for later optimization and settlement. They also pre-set communication as an object to be optimized.

What matters at entry is not simply whether one can speak. It is how one is allowed to speak in computable form. When expression is first admitted as event fields, recognition is more easily pulled toward chasing signal performance. Being responded to is easily reduced to being interacted with. Being understood is easily cashed out as popularity confirmation. In entry structures, subjects often do not first gain being taken seriously through reason exchange. They first gain a chance of being seen through performance in collectible signals. Still, eventization becomes a stable bias only when reach converts it into distribution outcomes. That bias becomes consequential only when reach turns these eventized traces into differential visibility.

4.2. Reach: turning visibility into a managed resource and modulating it

The reach site is not a neutral transmission step. It is the decision process through which platforms order, route, and distribute visibility in a quota-like way. Eventization at entry becomes a stable bias only when reach "pays it out" as distribution outcomes. Reach rewrites being seen from a communicative condition into an allocative result. It provides the second step of a laboring logic. Attention and visibility become scarce resources that can be governed and optimized.

In legal and governance debates, this curatorial distribution is often entangled with content moderation. When platforms change the scope of circulation through ranking, downranking, or reduced search visibility, affected users may not receive clear reasons or effective remedies [5]. Research on ranking effects shows that even with the same set of items, position in rank can strongly shape attention and interaction. Reach is not the natural display of content quality. It amplifies through visibility ordering. A basic precondition of recognition, being seen and being reachable, is institutionalized as a competitive opportunity of reach. Relational practice then drifts toward competition over shares of exposure [8].

When engagement targets are tightly coupled with recommendation ranking, and when evaluation outcomes feed back in inheritable weights or thresholds, reach can form a self-reinforcing loop. Content that generates more engagement receives higher rank. Higher rank generates more engagement. Over time, communication is more likely to be locked into a predictable and optimizable metric track [8]. This resource logic also works through lowering visibility. Platforms do not always rely on removal. They often modulate circulation through downranking, throttling, reduced recommendation, or reduced search visibility. This can achieve governance aims without visibly triggering controversy [26]. For recognition, this turns the public conditions of communication into adjustable valves. It reorders recognition within distribution logics that are hard to perceive, hard to explain, and hard to contest. This also explains why the later procedural minimum must start with perceptibility and appealability of reach discretion. Without these constraints, recognition opportunities can harden into an uncontestable technical valve.

Entry supplies measurable inputs. Reach turns visibility into a managed resource. The exposure gaps produced at reach then settle further at evaluation into inheritable scores, labels, and thresholds. Visibility differences are rewritten into differences in standing.

4.3. Evaluation: building thresholds, amplification effects, and arbitrariness

If entry and reach largely shape whether recognition can occur, meaning whether one can be seen and reached, the evaluation site shapes how recognition is confirmed and how it persists. It determines what scores and labels settle, and how they feed back into the next round of distribution. Evaluation on platforms is not limited to immediate user reactions. Through model-based metric systems, interaction outcomes are settled into scores, labels, and weights. They are built into routine processes of content distribution, risk control, and rule enforcement. Research on large-scale content governance shows that automated and semi-automated tools, from hash matching to machine learning classification and risk prediction, form the infrastructure of algorithmic governance [27]. In this structure, recognition is more often experienced as system-assigned eligibility and priority, rather than as confirmation achieved through reason exchange in dialogue.

Evaluation does not only record the past. Through thresholding and feedback, it pre-sets distribution eligibility as inheritable conditions, and it shapes later distribution upstream. Once scores, labels, and weights become entry conditions for reach and opportunity allocation, they shape the next round of distribution in return. They push expression and interaction to converge on predictable targets. Being taken seriously then looks less like an outcome of intersubjective negotiation and more like an institutional verdict. At the

experiential level, recognition appears as adaptation to metric thresholds. At the structural level, it appears as a laboring logic completing settlement and reproduction through evaluation.

Metricized evaluation also introduces amplification effects. Recommender systems research has long discussed popularity bias and its dynamic reinforcement. Systems tend to recommend already popular items. Popular items gain more exposure. Concentration and lock-in grow further [9]. In platform communication, this means that recognition is easily captured by popularity metrics. Mutual recognition can be displaced by a circular feedback between exposure and interaction. Damaged recognition can then stabilize as being unseen or being pushed to the margins. Evaluation metrics do not only reflect preferences. Through feedback, they keep strengthening existing patterns and settle into weights that systems can call again and again.

When content governance and risk scoring rely on multiple models, multiple thresholds, and shifting strategies, the same content can receive different judgments under different settings. This produces inconsistency and uncertainty. It is a practical source of algorithmic arbitrariness [28], and it triggers disputes about procedural justice and expressive rights. Information systems research on algorithmic accountability underscores this point. When organizations cannot provide explainable systems, trust erodes. Perceived accountability depends heavily on explainability and on visible evidence that systems are regularly reviewed [29]. Once evaluation becomes an entry condition for reach and opportunity allocation, recognition is more likely to be experienced as persistent labeling, misclassification, and downranking. Mutual recognition becomes more fragile because it depends less on publicly contestable reasons and more on unseen model judgments and weight feedback.

So metric thresholds become solid recognition conditions because feedback in the loop front-loads distribution and evaluation outcomes as inheritable eligibility. Recognition is then more often lived as being unseen, throttled, scored, and labeled. These dynamics are exactly why the dispute cannot stop at accuracy. Once thresholds allocate standing, the question becomes what procedural floor must accompany discretionary allocation.

Once evaluation outcomes shape later opportunities through thresholds or weights, the controversy is no longer only about accuracy. It is about whether a minimal due process is preserved. That minimum includes perceptibility, explainability, contestability, avenues for appeal, and error correction. Without it, governance risks sliding into pure data behaviorism [30]. This also grounds the normative inference in Section 5. If reach discretion and evaluation thresholds already allocate recognition opportunities, then this minimal set should not be treated as optional [31].

5. Conclusion

The crisis is structural. Platforms relocate the conditions of mutual recognition into computable thresholds that can be stored and reused. The conditions under which mutual recognition can take hold are institutionally offloaded within structures of value realization and governance at scale. They are translated into computable metric thresholds.

The core claim is that, within the scope defined in this article, a laboring logic becomes a reproducible process structure through the feedback loop of entry, reach, and evaluation. The scope is narrow and explicit. Distribution is driven by recommendation ranking. Model-based governance is routine. Evaluation outcomes are inheritable and feed back into later opportunities. In this structure, being seen, being responded to, and being recognized tend to depend more on metrics such as popularity and ratings. Recognition damage then appears as a traceable structural result. Mutual recognition is forced to pass through the same set of thresholds before it can take effect. Relational stance drifts in an objectifying direction. What this yields is a compact

account of the loop mechanism, its normative meaning, and the procedural floor implied at each site. It also clarifies what the framework contributes and how it can be used comparatively across platforms.

5.1. Key findings

The key finding is that when three conditions are jointly present, a laboring logic does not appear as an abstract trend. It operates through the coupling of three sites, entry, reach, and evaluation. The three conditions are quota-like allocation of reach, inheritable evaluation outcomes, and feedback reproduction over time. Under these conditions, the very possibility of mutual recognition is institutionally offloaded into measurable metric thresholds. Mutual recognition is then more often paid out as metric payoffs and weight changes. Reason exchange is compressed in institutional position. It becomes an add-on that comes after the threshold has already been passed.

This offloading is structurally coercive because value realization keeps demanding three kinds of operable objects. First, communicative traces are assetized into tradable data. They supply the base resources for value recovery [11]. Second, visibility is institutionalized as a tunable object of allocation. Reach outcomes can then be optimized and inserted into the feedback chain. Third, platforms hold concentrated control over distribution entry points and attention infrastructures. This allows the first two moves to scale and to persist. It is how metric thresholds harden into the default grammar [13].

Metricization stabilizes as a reproducible structure because a laboring logic offloads recognition conditions through the three-site loop into thresholds that are computable, schedulable, and inheritable. Passing through those thresholds is not merely an efficiency shift, it is a normative deformation of relations because standing becomes conditional on reusable scores rather than contestable reasons.

5.2. Normative implications and minimal institutional conditions

The normative upshot is a minimal standing claim rather than an ideal of consensus. The claim is not that such procedures make platforms fully just, but that without them affected agents are no longer treated as participants in a reason-demanding relation. Where visibility and opportunities are allocated through institutional discretion, these procedural conditions are necessary for recognition to retain its minimal standing meaning rather than collapsing into threshold adaptation. Wherever discretion allocates visibility and opportunity, subjects remain entitled to reason-demanding and error-correcting relations, so that recognition does not collapse into mere adaptation to thresholds.

What we defend is not a perfect ideal of communication. It is a narrower but contestable floor. When an agent's visibility and opportunities are allocated through institutional discretion, the agent must at least be treated as a participant who can demand reasons, contest discretion, and seek correction through appeal and error repair. Recognition is not only an affective matter. It is a normative condition of social relations because it carries a minimal standing claim. A person should count as someone who can enter a responsive relation and sustain reasonable expectations. When recognition conditions are offloaded into invisible metric thresholds, the responsive relation between self and other is interrupted by apparatuses. It is replaced by threshold adaptation. In that situation, repair cannot begin with moral exhortation. It has to begin with minimal procedural conditions. Discretion must become perceivable, explainable, contestable, appealable, and correctable.

These elements are jointly necessary conditions for a responsive relation under discretionary power. Perceivability comes first, because an agent cannot address, contest, or even enter a responsive relation with a decision that cannot be noticed. Yet perceivability without reasons still leaves discretion as opaque control rather than reason exchange, so explainability is required. Explanation, in turn, is empty if it cannot be

challenged: without contestability, reasons collapse into mere announcements. Contestation also remains purely expressive unless it can trigger review through an institutional channel, which is why appealability is required. Finally, review that cannot repair errors leaves standing effectively unchanged, so correctability completes the chain. "Minimum" here therefore names a strict standing-based derivation: once discretionary thresholds allocate recognition opportunities, these procedural conditions are prerequisites for recognition to retain its minimal standing meaning.

In recognition-theoretic terms, this floor corresponds to the minimal standing meaning of recognition. When visibility and opportunities are allocated through institutional discretion, the person should still be recognized as a participant who can enter a responsive relation and demand reasons for discretionary decisions. What Honneth calls reification is not mainly a decline in attitude. It is an objectifying shift in relational stance. Recognition conditions are obscured and outsourced to apparatus discretion [19].

The normative conclusion therefore points to procedural constraints under discretionary power. The way out should not be imagined as a return to a pure and unmediated communicative community. In platformized societies, mediation and governance at scale cannot simply be removed. The real question is how mediation is organized. Can recognition and justification retain minimal institutional conditions at key sites, so that mutual recognition is not monopolized by a single metric grammar. We reject a situation in which recognition conditions are monopolized by one metric grammar. When mutual recognition must repeatedly pass through the same popularity and rating thresholds to take effect, responsive understanding is demoted in institutional position. It becomes secondary. This is not only about governance failure on a few platforms. It is a structural tendency of the loop under pressures of value realization and governance at scale. That is why the governance boundary is better placed in institutional constraints at process sites, rather than in moral exhortation or platform self-regulation.

Recent platform governance research introduces the idea of visibility moderation. It argues that platforms govern not only by removal, but more often by adjusting the scope of reach through downranking, throttling, and reduced recommendation [26]. Once governance is carried mainly by imperceptible modulation of visibility, recognition relations are more easily placed under technical discretion that cannot be contested. Evaluations of the DSA Transparency Database, the Statements of Reasons, point to a related problem. Even strong transparency tools can fail to support effective oversight when usability and accessibility are weak, when key review data is missing, and when platform reporting is inconsistent or unreliable. "Transparency" becomes contestability and remedy only when institutions make it searchable, comparable, and traceable through an error-correction chain [6]. Legal work on shadow downranking also notes that such measures are often hard for affected users to detect, which creates tensions around transparency and remedy rights [5]. On the boundary of DSA risk governance, Husovec argues that interventions aimed at reducing misinformation should remain strictly content-neutral. If the Commission writes contested value judgments into enforcement as a substitute legislator, it crosses a regulatory red line [4].

These debates support a boundary condition. In recognition-theoretic terms, this is not an additional benefit but a condition for preserving the minimal standing meaning of recognition under discretionary allocation. In the normative grammar of recognition, being taken seriously is not only about outcomes. It also concerns how outcomes are produced under discretion. The affected person must at least receive reasons, be able to contest, and be able to seek correction. Otherwise mutual recognition degrades into passive adaptation to invisible thresholds. Procedural justice work stresses the need for voice. When affected groups lack a position from which they can state problems and trigger correction, regulation is more likely to be experienced as unfair imposition. By contrast, embedding voice into procedure is more likely to generate respect, acceptance, and legitimacy [32].

The minimal boundary we propose therefore sits in normative conditions at the three sites of the loop. At entry, interface rules and defaults should be clearly disclosed. Users should have real options to choose and to exit, so that expression is not forced to fold into metric grammar at the very site. At reach, modulation of visibility should be perceivable, with reasons and channels of appeal, so that downranking and throttling do not become uncontestable technical discretion. At evaluation, labels and weights should carry duties of explanation and correction, so that misclassification does not harden in a black box and keep feeding back into distribution. Across the three sites, perceivability targets reach discretion most directly, because that is where visibility is modulated. Explainability and contestability run across reach and evaluation in reason-giving and review processes. Appeal and correction terminate in evaluation, but they also require entry to preserve traceable records and usable exit or correction interfaces, so that correction can actually be institutionalized.

A defensible floor follows. Once entry, reach, and evaluation already allocate recognition opportunities, governance debates should treat procedural conditions at the three sites as the boundary. Platforms should bear a minimal burden of explanation and remedy for discretionary decisions. Repair does not mean abolishing measurement tools. It means preventing metrics from becoming the only language, so that mutual recognition does not always need to become a struggle for metric returns in order to take effect.

5.3. Contributions and comparative use

The contribution of this article is to push the recognition crisis of platform communication into a locatable and comparable explanation of process structure. Normatively, it offers a platform-specific restatement of "reification and damaged recognition." When mutual recognition must pass through metric thresholds such as visibility allocation and rating cutoffs to take effect, recognition conditions are offloaded into apparatus discretion. Relational stance then drifts toward objectification. Explanatorily, the core contribution is to locate where this normative judgment is made real. Through the feedback loop of entry, reach, and evaluation, the article shows that offloading does not occur in the abstract. It stabilizes at three sites, eventization at entry, turning visibility into a managed resource at reach, and building thresholds into evaluation. Feedback then keeps strengthening the pattern. In this way, macro diagnosis is translated into mechanism explanation.

On this basis, the normative inference is an institutional translation of the grammar of recognition. If reach discretion and evaluation thresholds in fact allocate recognition opportunities, then reason-giving, contestability, and correctability must correspond to a procedural minimum at the three sites. The minimum includes perceivability, explainability, contestability, channels of appeal, and error correction. Otherwise mutual recognition degrades into adaptation to invisible thresholds. As a comparative tool, the framework uses the loop as a shared coordinate to decompose platforms by sites. It allows comparison of how strongly platforms format expression and default collection at entry, how strongly they allocate and modulate visibility at reach, and how strongly they embed thresholds in inheritable labels and weights at evaluation. With the same language, one can judge loop strength and the varied forms of damaged recognition. The framework can also be transferred to other digitized organizational settings where visibility quotas and rating or risk thresholds allocate opportunities. The point of transfer is to compare the intensity of discretion and inheritance at each site and the consequences of feedback.

As a mechanism framework, it also yields comparable empirical expectations. When a platform uses stronger eventization templates and default collection at entry, more strongly optimizes visibility on the distribution side with engagement targets, and more frequently sets thresholds through inheritable weights or labels in governance, mutual recognition is more likely to appear as metric payoffs. It also becomes more fragile because it depends more heavily on visibility discretion. By contrast, when the three sites include workable exit options, appeal channels, and correction procedures, the one-way dominance of metric

thresholds over recognition should be weakened. Future research can build observable indicators for each site and compare loop strength with patterns of damaged recognition across platforms.

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