



Family life with digital Platforms

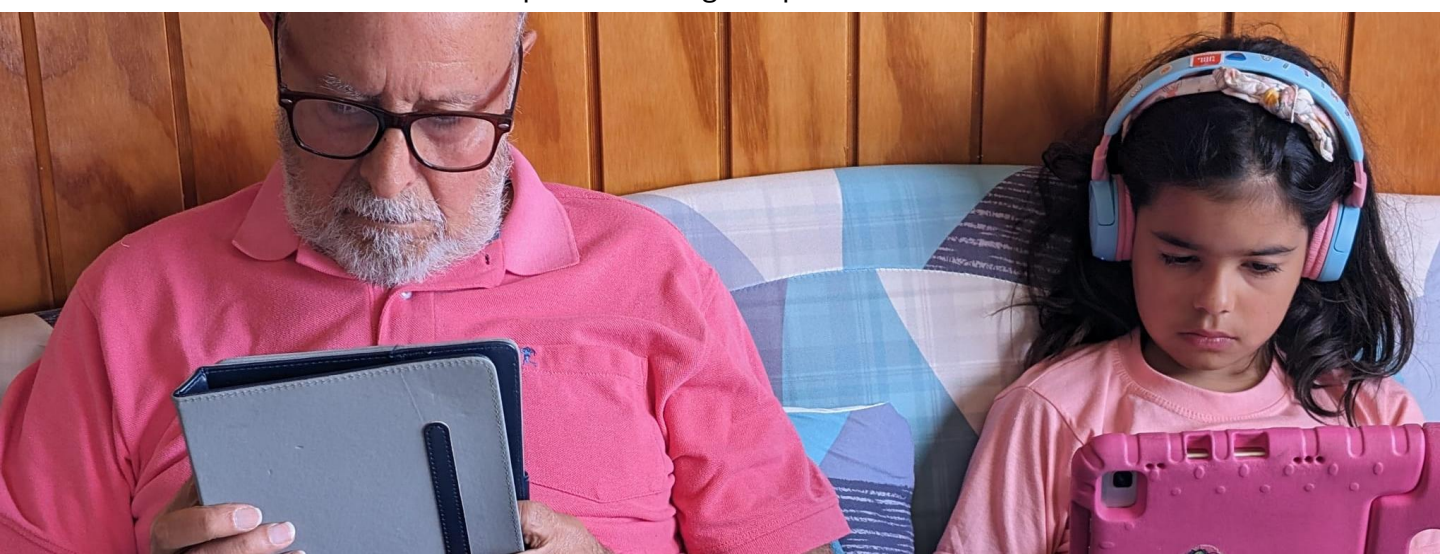
Authors: Ola Erstad, Veronika Kalmus, Sonia Livingstone, Oana Benga, Raquel Mino & Moises Esteban Guitart

How are digital platforms embedded in the lives and practices of modern families? *'Platforming Families: Tracing digital transformations in everyday life across generations (PlatFAMs)'* researches three generation families (children, parents, grandparents) in the UK and four other European countries (Estonia, Norway, Romania, Spain).

We aim to reveal how families are navigating and negotiating their relationships using pervasive, powerful, commercial and data-driven digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Amazon, Netflix, Roblox and many more. Does 'platformisation' change how families communicate, learn, participate, shop and care for each other? Or how they imagine and construct their shared future?

Findings so far – from our literature review

- ◆ Most of the evidence focuses on children's use platforms, there is less on parents and very little on grandparents or on the relations among the three generations. We need to learn more about how families use, imagine or talk about digital platforms.
- ◆ Research shows that family intimacy, belonging, care, conflict and power struggles are now negotiated through digital platforms.
- ◆ The platformisation of family life creates new opportunities for families to do things together but can create inequalities and marginalise those who are online less.
- ◆ Different generations may have opposite aims – grandparents may hope to stay connected with their families, parents may wish to organise family life or activities, while children may seek to have fun or be independent.
- ◆ Children are often defined as the family experts in using platforms – yet their digital activities can be invisible to parents and grandparents.



Key messages

- 1 A substantial literature on the platformisation of family life shows that technology lets families shape platforms to meet their needs, allowing each member to redefine family and themselves through everyday online interactions.
- 2 Evidence suggests that technologies enhance more than they undermine the quality of family connections, intimacy and care, especially for dispersed family members.
- 3 Literature on how digital technologies become embedded in domestic power struggles finds that emerging practices of surveillance can be as much welcomed as resisted within families, and that children may assert their agency through use of technology in new ways.
- 4 Although families are often multigenerational, we find an overwhelming focus on the parent–child relationship and a lack of studies exploring the experience of grandparenting in a digital age.
- 5 Families often connect by sharing their everyday lives on social media. This includes showing family time, parenting, and interactions across generations. The digital world helps create and share "micromemories" and family relationship narratives. Visual tools play a crucial role in preserving and reliving these intimate moments.

About the project

Between 2022 to 2025, we are reviewing the published evidence before interviewing up to one hundred three-generation families over two years and conducting secondary analysis of European survey data. In addition to generating new knowledge of intergenerational experiences in the digital age, PlatFAMs will recommend practical actions for relevant stakeholders whose policies can benefit family life.

PlatFAMs is funded through the CHANSE (Collaboration of Humanities and Social Sciences in Europe) call on 'Transformations: Social and cultural dynamics in the digital age' with Horizon Europe (European Commission) and national research funding agencies. It is led by the University of Oslo's Department of Education (coordinator) and Department of Media and Communication.

More about PlatFAMs: bit.ly/Platfams

