

## Social Research Call

# *Social Media & Democratic Life: Investigating YouTube as Alternative Media System*



**Acronym:** YAMS

**Project leader:** Òscar Coromina

**Host organisation:** Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**Main purpose of the project:** The main goal is to develop a large-scale, empirically grounded map of YouTube's content creator environment in Spain and Portugal. It will also examine how creators, audiences, and discourses interact to shape communities within the YouTube Alternative Media System (YAMS), focusing on narratives, engagement strategies, and platform-driven incentives.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Using a data-driven, multi-method approach, the project will extract and analyze large-scale metadata from YouTube through API-based crawling. On the analytical side it combines computational techniques (like topic modelling and visual network analysis) with qualitative insights and stakeholder engagement (e.g., data sprints and creator surveys).

**Potential results:** Expected outcomes include a comprehensive map of professional YouTube creators in Spain and Portugal, academic publications on content and audience dynamics, and a policy-oriented report. The project will provide evidence-based insights into content typologies, monetization strategies, and community formations within the Spanish and Portuguese YouTube spheres.

**Social relevance of the research:** Amid concerns about online radicalization, disinformation, and civic disengagement, the research will provide critical data on the content and influence of the YouTube alternative media system (YAMS). It will identify key trends and actors to inform media literacy, regulation, and public discourse in support of democracy and accountability.

**Originality/value of the project:** This is the first project to build a large-scale, empirically grounded map of YouTube's alternative media environment in Spain and Portugal. Its methodological innovation lies in blending computational analysis with participatory methods, ensuring practical relevance for regulators, educators, and civil society.