ESA RN18 Mid-Term Conference

COMMUNICATION, CAPITALISM AND CRITIQUE: CRITICAL MEDIA SOCIOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Polytechnic of Turin, Italy
1-3 September 2022

Book of Abstracts

COMMUNICATION, CAPITALISM AND CRITIQUE: CRITICAL MEDIA SOCIOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

We live in times of deepening economic, political, social, pandemic, ideological and ecological crises that are apparent in widespread precarious labour, the commodification of (almost) everything, the rise of new nationalism, populism and authoritarian forms of capitalism, and ecological destruction. The display of power and counter-power, domination and spaces of power struggles, and the commons and the commodification of the commons characterise modern society. Contradictions and antagonisms between the haves and the have-nots shape contemporary Europe and beyond. Media and communication are fields of conflict in this power struggle: they are power structures and sites of power struggles, able to support both the expansion and the commodification of the commons. RN 18 invites contributions to the sociological understanding of these processes at its conference in 2022.

This year's conference will be in Torino, where the Italian intellectual and political activist Antonio Gramsci lived, and where he set up the weekly newspaper 'L'Ordine Nuovo' and acted as editor of the newspaper 'Il Grido del Popolo'. Gramsci exerted huge influence on the study of culture and communication in society. The meeting will take a particular note of this and invites papers that address the question: What is the relevance of Gramsci and other approaches and thinkers inspired by Marx for the study of communication and society today?

ESA RN18 calls for contributions that shed new light on theoretical and analytical insights that help to shape critical media sociology in the 21st century, in particular, but not exclusively, addressed to any of the following:

1. **Critical Media Sociology and Capitalism**
2. **Critical Media Sociology and Critical Theory**
3. **Critical Media Sociology and Critical Political Economy of Media, Information and Communication**
4. **Critical Media Sociology, Gramsci and Hegemony**
5. **Critical Media Sociology and Ideology Critique**
6. **Critical Media Sociology and Cultural and Communication Labour**
7. **Critical Media Sociology and Digital Labour**
8. **Critical Media Sociology, New Nationalism and Authoritarianism**
9. **Critical Media Sociology, Consumption and Production in Urban Processes**
10. **Critical Media Sociology, Patriarchy and Gender**
11. **Critical Media Sociology, Social Inequality, Identity and Subjectivities**
12. **Critical Media Sociology, COVID-19, Pandemic and Crisis**
13. **Critical Media Sociology, Ecology and Climate**
14. **Critical Media Sociology, Democracy and the Public Sphere**
15. **Critical Media Sociology and the Left**
16. **Critical Media Sociology, the Commons and Alternatives**

While the conference wishes to encourage contributions to the questions indicated here, it seeks to provide an opportunity for the presentation of the best and most widely interesting work by sociologists of communications and media regardless of specific focus.

KEYNOTE TALKS

The Technosocial Question

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Abstract: At the turn of the 2010s, political scientists, sociologists and Internet critics commented on the unexpected "return of the social" in digital culture such as represented by the rise of social media to dominant genre of networked connectivity. This development was overall explained as a social that was "compatible with neoliberalism" – that is one reduced to weak connections between individuals, deprived of its revolutionary or socialist meanings, and subject to new forms of automated control. Ten years later, the technosocial question exceeds that of social media, as it raises larger issues about the ongoing political re-actualization of three key properties of the modern social: its constitution as a secular and concrete abstraction in the modern social sciences – which is being currently reconfigured by the turn to network science, data analytics and machine learning; its capacity to operate as a territory of government for socialism – a capacity that is today represented by digital platforms' mobilization of algorithmic regulation; but also its historical relation to the Marxist notion of "social revolution", that is the modern, post-theological aspiration to the transformation of social order in the name of social justice – which is also at work in contemporary network cultures in different ways. The conference considers the political implications of this reconfiguration both in terms of new forms of power, but also as part of the effort to grasp the character of contemporary revolutionary politics.

Short bio: Tiziana Terranova is Full Professor of Cultural Studies and Digital Media Theory in the Department of Human and Social Sciences at the Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale', Italy. She has written and lectured extensively on the political implications of digital networks and information technologies. She is the author of Network Culture: politics for the information age (Pluto Press, 2004), After the Internet: Digital Networks Between Capital and the Common (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2022) and the forthcoming The Technosocial Question (Minnesota University Press). She has been part of many groups involved in the task of collectively thinking about the politics of technology, including the free university networks Uninomade 2.0 and Euronomade; Robin Hood Minor Asset Management; the Centre for Postcolonial and Gender Studies at L'Orientale University, Naples; the Ecologie Politiche del Presente network, the Critical Computation Bureau, and the Technoculture Research Unit (www.technoculture.it).

New Orders: Hegemony as a Method of Political Work

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Abstract: From the time of his apprenticeship as a militant journalist in the workers' movement in Turin during and after WWI, Gramsci was committed to a vision of the goal of emancipatory politics as the construction of a "New Order" [Ordine nuovo] – the title of his most significant early experiment in revolutionary cultural and political organisation. In the wide-ranging discussions that have marked the interdisciplinary and international diffusion of Gramsci's thought since the 1960s and 1970s, it has often been thought that his key contribution to such a goal was the development of a novel theory of the nature of modern political, social and cultural power, encapsulated in the notion of hegemony conceived as a metatheory able to be deployed diversely on particular terrains. In this presentation, I will argue that the significance

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of Gramsci's understanding of hegemony for us today might instead consist in the ways in which he translated and developed the Bolshevik tradition's conception of hegemony as a 'method of political work'. Viewed in this perspective, Gramsci's Prison Notebooks outline a sophisticated strategic perspective well placed to dialogue with some of the central concerns of contemporary radical social and political movements, and to offer concrete proposals for their further development in the form of a potential 'aitiology of self-emancipatory politics', in at least four senses: the goal of hegemonic politics as the construction of a new order, the nature of self-emancipatory politics as the production of historical progress, the method of leadership conceived as fragility and experimentation, and the organizational form of hegemony as a pedagogical laboratory.

Short bio: Peter D. Thomas teaches the History of Political Thought at Brunel University London. Among other works, he is the author of The Gramscian Moment (Brill, 2009) and Radical Politics: On the Causes of Contemporary Emancipation (OUP, 2022). He serves on the Editorial Boards of Historical Materialism and the International Gramsci Journal.

The Spring is not a Spring. Arab uprisings reloaded: Against the logic of 'case-studies', for a theory of the Networked Image

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Abstract: This talk offers a contribution to the formulation of a theory the visual in the time of networked technologies. It draws upon a vast array of ethnographic material collected from Syria in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising which serves as the empirical ground to reflect on what I call 'the networked image', an unprecedented aesthetic and epistemic condition of the visual activated by networked technologies. Networked images have evacuated the domain of the representational, of the indexical. Rather than mirroring or portraying an empirical reality, they are invested in shaping their own. They take a distance from fake news, as truthfulness or falseness are no longer parameters or ways of assessing this emerging visual and epistemic regime. Circulation is what makes their exchange value, as they acquire worth in being constantly uploaded, downloaded, commented upon, shared, and liked; rather than in being looked at. Their 'sociality' unfolds through a relational process involving the whole techno-social infrastructure of the web, indifferently made by human and post-human entities (databases, algorithms, hashtags, BOTs).

Short bio: Donatella Della Ratta is a media ethnographer, writer, performer, and curator specializing in digital media and networked technologies, with a focus on the Arab world. She is Associate Professor of Communications and Media Studies at John Cabot University, Rome. She holds a PhD from the University of Copenhagen and is former Affiliate of the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University. From 2007 until 2013 she managed the Arabic speaking community for the international organization Creative Commons. In 2012 she co-founded the website SyriaUntold, recipient of the Digital Communities award at Ars Electronica 2014. She has curated several international art exhibitions and film programs on Syria, including "Syria off frame", (Fondazione Luciano Benetton and Fondazione Cini, Venice, 2015), and "Syrian New Waves" (The Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam, 2017). She has published a wide range of books and essays on media and networked technologies, among them *Shooting a Revolution: Visual Media and Warfare in Syria* (Pluto Press, 2018); Teaching Into the Void and Shot Theory (INC, 2021); Selfies Under Quarantine: Exploring Networked Emotions in the Time of 'Social Distancing' (Imaginations, 2021). With Geert Lovink, Teresa Numerico, and Peter Sarram she has co-edited the collective volume *The Aesthetics and Politics of the Online Self: A Savage Journey Into the Heart of Digital Cultures* (Palgrave McMillan, 2021).

PLENARY SESSION

Understanding Urban Processes Through A Critical Perspective

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The session aims to offer a critical lens from three different perspectives and disciplines (Geography, Economics and Urban Planning) at certain urban processes. Economist Luigi Buzzacchi's talk focuses on the word 'platforms' and their monopolistic drifts. In fact, as the study of the tourism sector and the case of Airbnb show, we are witnessing a general tendency toward the concentration of the market and the monopolization of platforms. Francesca Governa, making reference to an editorial project led by a group of critical geographers, discusses the influence of Antonio Gramsci in contemporary geographical debate and critical urban theory especially considering two points: the nation-state foundations of the "political" and the contradictory geo-historical dynamics concerning the extended urbanization processes. Lastly, the talk by Camillo Boano, urban planner, starts with the word 'refusal.' He will directly engage with the role of critical theory (if any) in the shaping, forming and norming of architectural knowledge and design practice. What sort of critical thinking is needed in a time when its very existence seems threatened? To what extent could critique still be a project for the future?

The animated GIF in Latin America Cultural Practices Resisting the Commodification of (Almost) Everything

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This presentation is based on an ongoing doctoral research that explores the critical and political possibilities of the animated GIF, understood as a technical and aesthetical new media object. We make this characterization from a multidisciplinary perspective that combines the Techno-Aesthetic Theory from Jean Louis Dèotte (2012) and Gilbert Simondon (2013), with the New Media Theory from Lev Manovich (2001). In addition, we agree with Nelly Richard (2011) when she says that the "critical and political possibilities" of a cultural practice, depend on the conflicts of representation that it provokes in codes of cultural meaning. Latin American contemporary researchers such as Adolfo Vera (2019), Flavia Costa and Claudio Celis (2020), propose that Techno-Aesthetics is a method itself, because it questions media objects (like the GIF) by analyzing the "layers of the technical object" (Simondon, 2013). The "internal layer" allows one to discover the object in its "pure" creation; the technical, aesthetic and cultural elements that are involved in its invention. The "interlayer" explores the object as a technological mediation, so it reveals intracategorial functions between technique and language. Finally, the "exterior layer" is the most "evident" part; it reveals the cultural expressions of the object and its functioning in common social practices. The Graphics Interchange Format (GIF) has an important role in digital culture. It was invented in 1987 by CompuServe to make the image visualization and sharing process easier through networked computers. Today, GIFs are known as small, short looping clips, that are easy to make, share and download. They have been compared with pre-cinematic objects like zoetropes or flipbooks, and many digital creators have taken advantage of those aesthetic bonds by underlining its playful and experimental essence. Its loops and transparency are technical affordances that can be turned into aesthetic and discursive strategies. We find its massive uses in online communication platforms and devices; people react and express their affections through GIFs like they do with emojis or stickers. The format is very popular in memetic cultures, useful for digital pornography and it is now proliferating in artistic environments. Although some of those expressions could be understood as counter hegemonic cultural constructions, they frequently end up reproducing political and neoliberal agendas. The problem is that almost every attempt of resistance to those agendas is neutralized by corporate and governmental forces that promote and finance technology developments oriented to data extraction and surveillance. But can we still find resistance in that landscape? We will analyze three cultural practices in Latin America that are exploring the resistance potential of the GIF, beyond the commodification of (almost) everything. The "Formato Gráfico Interminable Project" in Caracas, Venezuela; the "GIFs & VJ free software workshops" by Mexican artist Alina Sánchez; and the "Proyecto Rotatoria" initiative between researchers from Chile and Argentina, intend to transform that "exterior layer" landscape of the GIF by activating its deeper layers to articulate collective forces that oppose the commodified and standardized dynamics of the network. They take advantage of its interchangeable, fast, repetitive, slippery and almost promiscuous affordances, to resist what Hito Steyerl (2017) has called the "age of planetary civil war" signed by patented technologies, sophisticated surveillance, and growing inequality.

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What does the experience of communication labor tell us about 'intellectuality' monetized by datafication?

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Abstract: Due to the informatization of capitalist production, everyone has somewhat the function of intellectual today. The historical divide between intellectuals and 'non-intellectuals' that Antonio Gramsci expected to be broken down via the mass party and mass education has been blurred more than ever thanks to the informatization of the workforce. With this paper I aim to discuss the role of intellectuality in the post-Ford era drawing on the experiences of the advertising practitioners who encounter mass intellectuality captured by datafication in certain ways. Based on a case study carried out in the Istanbul office of a global communications agency in Turkey, this paper argues that datafied intellectuality is a new actor in advertising production and might limit the autonomy of advertising practitioners. Ultimately, I expect to contribute to the understanding of the contemporary role of intellectuality by employing the concept of immaterial labor in an empirical case. Keywords: mass intellectuality, communication labor, advertising practitioners, datafication. Background Antonio Gramsci says that "All men are intellectuals...but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (Gramsci, 2000: 304). For Gramsci, the political role of organic intellectuals of the proletariat was to equip the working class with certain educational and intellectual capabilities. However, contrary to Gramsci's expectations, the intellectualization of the working class was not achieved by the political leadership of organic intellectuals but the informatization of capitalist production via techno-scientific developments as a response to the resistance of the working class. This resulted in the reorganization of production by setting several activities productive such as defining cultural-artistic standards and public opinion, which redefined the role of intellectuals in society as mass intellectuality (Lazzarato, 1994: 132-133). Intellectual skills traditionally defined as 'professional' diffuse into society while human abilities such as communicative and cognitive competencies become productive (Virno, 2007; 2004: 110). While digitalization supported mass intellectuality, datafication captures the value created by mass intellectuality and monetizes it in various ways (Turow, Mcguigan & Maris, 2015; Cote, 2014). One of these ways is putting mass intellectuality into work in advertising production. This presents a challenge for the traditional occupations that produce cultural-intellectual content of commodities. Advertising practitioners are one of these groups who have been strongly facing this challenge. Although the agency of consumers/users has long been debated via 'prosumer' or 'digital labor' concepts, the relationship between mass intellectuality and labor in cultural industries attracted limited attention. Furthermore, the role of advertising practitioners in the creation of value was substituted with the productivity of mass intellectuality (2007). However, advertising practitioners' experience of encountering mass intellectuality captured by datafication tells us a more complicated story. Research Questions -In what ways does datafication capture mass intellectuality? -How does datafied mass intellectuality affect the work of advertising practitioners? -What is the relationship between communication labor in the advertising industry and mass intellectuality? Research Techniques A case study was carried out in the Istanbul office of a global communications agency in Turkey which is one of the few that included a data department in its body. The research drew on qualitative research techniques. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with agency professionals including data analysts and creatives from the conventional and digital teams were carried out. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with advertising/marketing professionals outside the agency were conducted. Related white papers and sector magazines were analyzed as supplementary sources. Results Datafication captures and monetizes mass intellectuality in various forms such as online/offline consumer data, interaction rates on social media or brand communities. Thus, intellectuality is put to work in advertising production. Datafied mass intellectuality might limit the autonomy of advertising practitioners and lead to the degradation of cultural work and require reskilling. Implications Mass intellectuality is a new actor in advertising production; however, it is not the sole creator of the cultural content.

There is a delicate relationship between mass intellectuality and communication labor in the creation of value. It is also difficult to ascertain the political role of intellectuality from this research; however, it is possible to say that the direct relation of intellectuality to economic production is closer than ever.

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Digital labour platforms and trade unions: convergences and divergences in the use of Facebook by a traditional union and two new virtual unions

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In the context of the new regime of accumulation that Harvey (1989) called "flexible accumulation", that strongly reinforces the destructive nature of capital (Mészáros, 1996), digital labour platforms have recently emerged and quickly became widespread. They raise new questions regarding working conditions and social labour relations, and they also outline "challenges and opportunities for trade unions" in the words of Pötzsch and Schamberger (2022) and for collective action. Facing to this new reality in the world of work, forms of individual and collective resistance using several repertories of action (Tilly, 2006) have emerged, what some authors considered almost impossible few years ago. From the "breque dos apps" in Brazil to the mobilizations of Deliveroo riders; from the rallies of Uber and Lyft drivers in the USA or the UK to the idling speed of TVDE (acronym for individual and paid transport of passengers in vehicles de-characterized from an electronic platform) drivers in Portugal, these actions are featured by a workforce with specific characteristics and in the context of a non-unionised sector. Furthermore, these workers are part of the so-called "nonstandard workers" or "atypical workers", an insecure workforce that is generally seen as "hard-to-organise" (Molina and Guardiancich, 2018). However, traditional unions are trying to organize them, alongside with new forms of unions or other kind of associations, both nationally and internationally. Among the new forms of unions, we are witnessing the birth of virtual unions, some of which only exist in social media. They are not new. For example, in Norway, the financial sector union set up a virtual union in 2002 called Rom aimed to organize the "nomads of working life" (Dolvik, 2002, p. 527). In Australia, on the initiative of the NSWLC, the IT Workers Alliance was created for the information and communication technology workers, whose organization has proved difficult everywhere. In the USA, the CWA has created a virtual union for IBM employees, the Alliance@IBM. In the same country, WashTech, was also launched, aiming to be "a voice for the digital workforce (...) from Silicon Valley to Boston". Also in the USA, the UFCW, to circumvent Walmart's anti-union policies, has developed a site specifically dedicated for organizing their workers. What is new with this new generation of virtual unions is that they are not a creation of real unions and that on the Internet they use preferably the social media rather than websites. In Portugal we have two virtual unions with presence on Facebook, the social media that is largely dominant in the country: Sindmove TVDE – National Union of Electronic Platforms and Tourism and Drivers' Union TVDE Portugal. This presence on Facebook is accompanied by the presence of traditional unions, such as STRUP - Road Transport Workers Union of Portugal,

affiliated to the class oriented CGTP-IN, a union that is trying to organize these workers and that had recently held the election of two union representatives among them. The aim of this paper is to analyse how these three unions are using Facebook. Are virtual unions using it to communicate with the workers in the same way as the traditional union or not? To what extent there is a convergence or a divergence in the form the two virtual unions use it? Is Facebook used by them to mobilize the workers or not? Are the levels of interaction high or low? For answering these questions, we have examined the online content of these three unions across the first four months of this year. Our main conclusion is that the way Facebook is being used does not contribute to the union revitalization.

From the border to the border: a collective and mobile art-based project on migration traces in Ventimiglia

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Since the reintroduction of systematic border control at the French-Italian border in June 2015, the town of Ventimiglia has once again witnessed an increasing number of people blocked in the attempt to continue their journeys (Amigoni et al., 2021). Our contribution proposes art-based research that the Laboratory of Visual Sociology, together with the Milotta/Doncehv collective, two curators, a group of students of the University of Genoa and the activists of Progetto20k have developed starting from the words and the drawings posted by migrants, like a message in a bottle, on the walls of 'Eufemia Info&Legal Point' in Ventimiglia (cf. the Exhibition catalogue, 2019). Based on the complex material posted by migrants, the art-based project tries to make different arts converge into a single register made of written texts, photographs, drawings, moving images, art and, of course, social research. The set of meetings and stories developed around the 'Eufemia' exhibition produces a collective and vast narrative of journeys and rethinks the role of social science and art in narrating the present. The multidimensional contribution aims to generate public and shared knowledge to boost people's reflections on the phenomenon of migration. In order to offer a new understanding of the French-Italian border, an area at the heart of Europe, we looked at the debate on 'migration traces', developing across the fields of art, border studies, and social activism. In line with the academic literature (Derluyn et al., 2014; Squire, 2014; De Leon, 2015; Bridgen, 2019), the final aim of the exhibition is to challenge the dominant representation of migrants as threats and 'objects to be governed' through empirical data focused on migrant stories (Kuusisto-Arponen, Gilmartin, 2015) and places along the routes, such as the Eufemia InfoPoint. Thus, we see our work as part of a body of studies aimed at rendering 'countless testimonies of passage and peril at the borders visible and legible' (Tsoni & Franck, 2019, p. 8). Our contribution will focus on three main aspects related to our art-based project. First of all, it will introduce Ventimiglia and, in particular, Eufemia as a distinctive experience of cross-border encounters between migrants and activists, a space that allows the creation and exhibition of the artefacts on which our analysis focuses. Secondly, it will go into even greater detail about the relationship between art and activism (the so-called "artivism"; cf. Trione, 2022). Thirdly, it will explore the centrality of the mobility of the exhibition, which, after being presented in Genoa, crossed the border several times (Nice, Ventimiglia, Menton) and then returned, finally, to Ventimiglia once its experience was over.

Attacks on the Media and Journalism by Authoritarian Right: Janez Janša's First 100.000 Tweets

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In June 2020 Janez Janša, serving as the Prime Minister of Slovenia, achieved a special feat. The total number of tweets on his Twitter account breached the 100.000 mark, in what is a significant amount for any user, not only for an active politician. In less than two years since, he added 60.000 more, despite actively serving as a PM. His political communication on Twitter has attracted attention of Slovenian journalists and the general public for several years now. His excessive use of the platform, faithful following and regular slurs aimed at his opponents, have even earned him the moniker Marshal Twito. But because of his troubling political turn towards authoritarian right (Fuchs, 2018; Morelock, 2018; Mudde, 2018), he also started to draw attention of the international media. After successfully forming his third government in 2020, he became the centre of attention for major journalistic institutions. This included pieces in The Guardian, The Economist, Der Spiegel, New York Times, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Le Monde and Financial Times amongst others. Not since Josip Broz – Marshal Tito, president of socialist Yugoslavia, has a politician connected to Slovenia received such an international "recognition". Many of the journalists focusing on Janša are finding parallels with Donald Trump and his problematic attitude towards journalists and the media. They noticed he is waging an active war against media and journalists not only on Twitter, but also in his political acts. In a fashion similar to Trump, Janša is also serially breaching unwritten democratic norms, including a lack of at least basic respect towards the media and journalists, which could have dire consequences for the functioning and integrity of democracy (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2019: 198–203). In the paper, we present a general analysis of how Janša has used Twitter in his first 100.000 tweets. We focus our attention especially on his original tweets, which represent approximately one-tenth of his total tweets, and how he is addressing journalists and the media in them. By identifying the most frequently used pejorative labels or ideonyms (invented terms, usually a combination of two words) associated with (or attributed to) a particular media outlet and/or journalist using the tools of network analysis, the study identifies typical patterns of Janša's discreditation practices on Twitter over the 10-year period since he set up his account. Our analysis, amongst others, indicates the importance and conceptual framework of particular coverage of the issues Janša attributed to journalists/media in certain periods. We also pay special attention to the comparison of the identified patterns in perspectives before and after the appearance of Donald Trump in the political arena, in order to reveal whether any significant changes occurred in Janša's style of public political communication.

Looking at digital capitalism through a gendered labour process lens

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This paper argues that a labour process perspective should be integrated in the study of digital capitalism, since it enables a meso-level analysis of work environments which can complement the inclination of Critical Theory to privilege the understanding of macro patterns (Pace, 2018).

Labour process analysis is a Marxist approach to which the contribution of Harry Braverman (1974) is considered pivotal, creating the premises to study changing work patterns due to refinements in technology, and emerging forms of capitalist management practices. It focuses on issues related to workers' control, resistance and consent by exploring what happens at the "point of production", where surplus value is extracted (Jaros, 2010). There are a few studies which link labour process analysis with the media field (e.g. McKinlay & Smith, 2009), and with the platform economy (e.g. Gandini, 2018; Veen, Barratt, & Goods, 2020), while this paper will focus on the gender dimension of the approach. The feminist labour process analysis tradition was instrumental in showing that in the context of industrial capitalism the construction of technical skill was contiguous with a masculinized type of physical prowess (Cockburn, 1981), and as such men were advantaged in paid work and, this enhanced their status at home, as breadwinners. On the shopfloor, women were relegated to semi-skilled and unskilled areas, which were more labour intensive, and the division of work was further reinforced by categories such as age and ethnicity (Glucksmann, 2009). In contrast, digital capitalism favors knowledge-intensive work, and its logic of accumulation is based on cooperation. The question arising is how gender dynamics are shaped by this transformation. I offer insights from an in-depth interview study with information technology workers (n=10 women, n=10 men) based in Bucharest, Romania, complemented by unobtrusive data, consisting of a recorded online course on Agile working principles. Information technology is a useful case study to examine the developments of digital capitalism in terms of labour as it entails offshore outsourcing and coordinating virtual teams, facilitating globalized knowledge work practices. In fact, Agile methods are increasingly adopted by a variety of occupational fields, from marketing (Accardi-Petersen, 2012) to academia (Senabre Hidalgo, 2018). The findings show that the cooperative work practices experienced by information technology workers contribute to degenderize the workplace system of signification, and some of its key interactions. The labour process perspective allows us to better understand how a body of practices which seek to enhance productivity dilute to a certain extent gender divisions in the workplace, and what are the contradictions.

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Open subsumptive processes and the production of subjectivities. Interpretative hypothesis on algorithmic management

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The inextricable relationship of platforms and algorithms with our datafied lives (Risi, 2021) and the emergence of platform capitalism (Armano et al. 2017) has brought new practices of control of work and data informed by digital connectivity, which is at the basis of 'algorithmic management' (Beverungen et al. 2019). Based on empirical findings on the digital media users (Risi et al, 2000), our paper proposes an interpretive framework to understand algorithmic management model and to re-energize the study of the notion of subsumption (Marx, 1973, 1990). We reframe subsumption not as an end-point outcome but as open subsumptive relations, which points to a dialectical perspective on power relations, exploitation and subjectivation inside a productive process mediated by platforms (Cingolani, 2021). In this sense, we advance a theoretical and practical redefinition of the concept of autonomy and (direct and indirect) control on an algorithmic basis and therefore we join the debate (Moore et al., 2020) on the apparent self-management prompted by digital technology. We argue that subjectivities have become fundamental performative agents of new kind of individuals/ users who allegedly, through (self-) management, can express their own personalities, access knowledge and better manage their inner emotions (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). As a result, neoliberalism becomes coextensive with all society by generating one of the great paradoxes of platform-driven subjectivities, i.e. the tension between abstraction and a rich individualization, exploitation and enjoyment, and auto-direction and hetero-direction (Armano et al. 2020). Those are the tensions by which we suggest a more open and dynamic subsumptive process. By drawing on 80 auto-ethnographic diaries of Italian young platform users, we argue that users on digital platforms can be framed as algorithmic prosumers. This first implies understanding individuals compulsively activated through recommendations which are algorithmically personalized. In fact, the connection between digital algorithms and human action transforms the "numerical representations" (Manovich 2001) into a complex process of interaction with human language, social representations, subjectivities and behaviours. Our findings show a recursive loop: data produced by variety of tracking and self-tracking pratices, in turn affect subjects' attitudes, dispositions, relationships preferences by constitutive representations. Thus, our study suggests that individuals reflect about themselves and their relationships through numbers within a neoliberal logic that is encoded into the platform. We also found a second process in the algorithmic management: a collaborative and proactive attitude on that feeds a compelling request for a co-active engagement in the digital environment. We use the term heteromation (Ekbia and Nardi, 2015) specifically to describe the formalization of a managerial decision-making process that exploits the users' perceived autonomy to feed the use of the platforms/devices, and consequently subsume their data and value. After all, our study dialectically frames algorithmic prosumers as identified subjects and identifying objects, thus inhabiting a fluid position inside the digital (free) labor (Terranova, 2012) and inside the subsumption process.

Journalism on platforms, a mapping of the Italian case

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Considering the platformization of news, linked to the more general mechanisms of deep penetration of reality by platforms (van Dijck, Poell 2013), it is crucial to investigate the face assumed by Italian journalism on platforms today to understand if and to what extent it is possible to speak of that integral journalism proposed by Gramsci (1975). The colonization of the human mind by capitalist logics (Rushkoff 2016) has led to a gradual redefinition of the platform-publisher relationship (Nielsen, Ganter 2018) and of referral to the datafication of the public, of the spaces of public deliberation, responsibility and accountability of the actors involved (van Dijck et al. 2019). As more extensively journalism represents that boundary work (Carlson, Lewis 2015; Splendore 2017), that conflicting and changing field more correctly of contemporary journalisms (Sorrentino, Splendore 2022) increasingly hybrid and immersed in the multiplication and convergence of different media fields to which market logics remain transversal and prevalent to which journalists' interpretive communities must adapt (Zelizer 1993), we must take into account two intervening dynamics in digital journalism that have redefined professional cultures, production logics, and choices of topics and modes of coverage. On the one hand, there is the corporate takeover of the digital world (Smyrnaios 2018) by an oligopoly of platforms that have not only acquired the power of distribution, but have become editors (Gillespie 2018; Napoli, Caplan 2017; Napoli 2021), insofar as they attribute through algorithms greater visibility to specific content and condition the media in their choice of topics and formats to adopt (Siapera 2013). On the other hand, there is the cultural chaos (McNair 2006) resulting from the access to personalized and algorithm-mediated information for a multitude of users, which compared to the critical issues already raised in the past (Blumler 1992), has reconfigured values of transparency and participation although presenting information content as a contingent cultural commodity (Nieborg, Poell 2018) in the pervasive perspective of capitalist realism (Fisher 2009). In fact, structuring journalism seems to be the same influence exerted by platforms, especially in the context of the attention economy (Goldhaber 2006, 1997) in which the two exposed dynamics are configured. Therefore, the hypotheses that this work intends to test concern the possibility that in the immersive, interconnected, individualized, iterative, and instantaneous journalism of the digital environment (Singer, 2018): 1) that integral journalism proposed by Gramsci finds horizons of realization; 2) the economic-communicative system is the result of the intersection of relations of power and relations of knowledge (Agamben 2006); 3) newspapers concur to build attention to content through the visibility obtained on the platforms, in order to enfranchise themselves from the latter and distinguish themselves from each other. In this perspective we will conduct an exploratory analysis of the presence of Italian newspapers on Facebook - first social network of the Meta group for news consultation in Italy - Youtube and TikTok (Newman et al. 2021), taking into account data from Audiweb and Datamedia Hub (2021), in order to categorize existing content and detect the distinctive profiles of more traditional and native digital newspapers to assess if and how the Italian media landscape and its offerings are changing, considering that digital platforms such as YouTube and TikTok are fundamentally restructuring cultural production in terms of metrics, speed and revenues (Nieborg et al. 2021).

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What is critical about critical media sociology: a meta-theoretical approach

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Before answering the question about what is critical, media sociology needs to answer the question of what makes the study of media and communication sociological. Media and communication studies are notoriously difficult to define and circumscribe. Their heritage draws on rhetoric and philosophy, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, political science, economics and sociology. Contemporary influences include science and technology studies, urban studies, gender studies, computer science, and information science to name a few. In this presentation, I will argue that in order to proceed with untangling the sociological underpinnings of (critical) media sociology, three questions need to be addressed. First, what is the social ontology of suggested theoretical and empirical approaches? In other words, which social relations shape the embeddedness of media and communication in society? Second, what is the social epistemology of communication within the media? Put differently, what 'knowledge' (in a phenomenological sense) do media and communication provide? Third, how are social ontology and epistemology connected with injustice, inequality, environmental destruction, and power relations more broadly? Only focusing on the third, axiological, question leaves (critical) media sociology exposed to a priori reasoning charges. Power is not an inherent quality of all social relations. It is a process borne out of specific social relations and social representations of 'knowledge'. To be sociological and critical, both theoretically and empirically, critical media sociology needs to trace (and expose) social relations that shape media and communication in society and influence which 'knowledge' is produced, distributed and consumed in society. Yet talking about social relations exclusively from the perspective

of sociology is equally filled with contradictions, competing theories and influences. There is no single theory that can explain the role of media and communication sociologically. Nor is sociology a stable discipline with clear boundaries, theories, methods, and objects of research. To provide potential pathways towards making sense of this complexity, a meta-theoretical approach will be used. I will briefly trace (classical) sociological theories at the micro (e.g. Simmel, Mead, and Goffman), mezzo (e.g. Foucault and Habermas), and macro level (e.g. Beck, Giddens, Marx) of society to provide starting points for answering questions of social ontology and epistemology in (critical) media sociology. I will then close with a brief overview of critical political economy and Marxian approaches that provide the most coherent and consistent theoretical system that answers all three questions relevant for (critical) media sociology. Needless to say, Marxian approaches are also filled with internal struggles and nuances in explaining certain features of (capitalist) society. While many traditional approaches reduce social ontology to class-relations, and social epistemology to ideology, other contributions from New Readings of Marx, Open Marxism, and related approaches expand social ontology and epistemology towards a much broader concept of the 'social from' (e.g. Bonefeld; Heinrich; Murray, and Smith). Simply put, social forms are a way in which elements of wealth production (means of production, labour power, money, etc.) become embedded in society as commodities, capital and social relations amongst them. The approach opens the way towards theorising neglected elements of social relations within, and outside of capitalism, as well as potential ways towards expanding (critical) media sociology today.

Using social media to build a counter-power movement. A case study of multiple sclerosis patients

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This research is focused on a patient-based social media movement (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015; Coretti and Pica, 2015; Kavada, 2018; Della Porta and Pavan, 2018) which advocated for clinical research into a discovery rejected by key elements of the medical establishment (Kuhn, 1996), in a confrontation which recalls a Gramscian war of position, which "does not consist solely of a set of actual trenches; it comprises the entire organisational and industrial structure of the territory that lies behind the arrayed forces" (Gramsci, 2007:162). The research aims to examine how social media interactions empowered patients, what motivated them to become a counter-power movement, and the elements which propelled the movement to create alternative patient associations that challenged communicative capitalism. This research comprises 62 individual, in-person, audio-recorded interviews with movement activists, and the researcher's autoethnography (Adams, Ellis, Holman Jones, 2017). These methods are triangulated with academic publications, newspaper and television news, as well as other publicly-sourced materials relating to the case study. The research finds that while the movement's activities, from planning through protest, occurred solely on the streets of social media (Gerbaudo, 2012; Picone et al., 2019) activists experienced the same passion and urgency (Barassi, 2015), as the academic literature has described for on-the-street activists. That is, social media paralleled the "real streets" as a forum for the movement's core activities (Fuchs, 2012; Kavada, 2015; Castells, 2015). In this patients' movement (Matteucci, 2021) there was not an identifiable person taking decisions and driving the movement in the form of traditional leadership, rather there was a connective leader (Della Ratta and Valeriani, 2012; Poell et al., 2016), whose main function was to disseminate information grounded in scientific research to patients and people at large, and to manage the aggregation of consent. The research further finds that the traditional patient associations' initial strategy of stonewalling the contested discovery was undercut by the momentum of the social media movement's activities (Papacharissi, 2016; Papacharissi and Trevey, 2018). The associations subsequently sought to quell the movement by lambasting social media as well as deploying a co-optation strategy (Dean, 2005), described by the activists as driven by commodification (Marx, 1976; Mosco 2009; Hardy 2014). This research concludes

that social media function as streets and city halls where decisions taken can be implemented in the real world and permit geographically distributed as well as differently abled people to gather in significant numbers. The space where human interactions can foster social life and deepen personal emotional relations (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, 2004), could be named the space of humanity. This is the space where timeless time and the realities of the counter power experience can happen, independent of whether that space is surrounded by real or digital bricks.

Digitalisation, neo-Taylorism and translation in the 2020s

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In her influential work The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, Shoshana Zuboff (2019) identifies two main objectives for the ardent champions of entrepreneurial digitalisation: Create lucrative business models based on user data and get people used to working with those ever evolving digital models! As is widely agreed in social and critical theory, the onward march of digitalisation, both in the work place and in society as a whole, results in ever new forms of cognitive-behavioural simulations and automation patterns (cf. Baudrillard 2010) alongside the continuously widening influence of instrumental reason on communicative interactions across the globe (cf. Adorno and Horkheimer 2002). Against the backdrop of this epistemological frame, this paper will focus on one ubiquitous modality of communication that has been widely ignored in critical media sociology. Hence, by focusing on translation services and practices as an integral – yet largely hidden – part of the global language and media industries, we aim to provide a critical overview of digital transcultural communication in the third decade of the new millennium. We will relate Zuboff's two key points from above to modern translation practices, interweaving our discussion with the growing debate on 'computer-assisted neo-Taylorism' (cf. Gautié et al. 2020). In Translation Studies, too, only recently critical studies emerged that explicitly foreground ethical issues concerning the increasing use of machine translation in the daily routines of translators and media professionals (e.g. Moorkens et al. 2020). Just as in other industries, neo-Taylorist principles oblige linguistic mediators to strive for productivity, efficiency and speedy delivery (Moorkens 2020, Sakamoto 2019). What is more, automated translation practices, fuelled by the success of good-quality neural machine translation since the early 2010s – an AI-based technology that relies on deep learning mechanisms – are set to change the face of digital communication forever. Digital neo-Taylorism is especially rife in the global translation industry, an industry which today is overwhelmingly located on globally interconnected virtual online platforms, where largely underpaid professionals tend to be exploited by means of non-creative yet laborious post-editing tasks or crowdsourcing translation activities (cf. Jiménez-Crespo 2017). Recalling Zuboff's two entrepreneurial objectives, the paper attempts to answer the following two interrelated questions: To what extent can language mediators, for instance translating journalists and professional translators, actually remain 'neutral' communicators, given that by today's ubiquitous use of machine translation technologies – above all Google Translate and DeepL – they are feeding their own user data into ever growing machine translation engines and thereby simultaneously and incessantly enlarging the already enormous data 'treasure troves' of corporations like Google. Secondly, to what extent are these linguistic mediators realising or willing to realise the cultural, economic and long-term linguistic consequences of using automated translation tools. It will, in sum, be instructive for critical media sociologists to receive an informed critical insight into the dubious ethics of 'automated ubiquitous translation practice' which – just like the Gramscian hegemonic 'elephant in the room' – remains invisible both to the public at large and to the naked eye of even most professional observers in the cultural and social sciences.

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Hegemony as Subsumptive Relations: Integrating Marx and Gramsci for a Critique of Digital Fixed Capital and Domesticated Subjectivities

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The main purpose of this paper is to operate a cross-fertilization between Marx's take on subsumption (1990, 1973) and Gramsci's take on hegemony (1975), in order to both advance a theoretical discussion on capitalism totality as well to provide a critical interpretation on the current relationship of digital technologies and labor. In line with Gramsci's considerations on social and historical homologies, I will show how shedding light over the reciprocal translatability of subsumption and hegemony may both produce a remedy for their respective (interpretative)shortcomings as well as offer a holistic and timely perspective of power relations inside a capitalist system. I will exemplify the explanatory power of such framework commenting on the role of digital fixed capital and the so-called domestification of the worker (Bologna 1997) during the COVID-19 lock-down. Both notions describe totalizing dynamics, asymmetric power relations and mediated class antagonism. However, while hegemony mostly tend to be used to describe a reality removed from the 'hidden abode of production,' subsumption seems to experience the reverse issue, being relegated in such a realm. What do we gain by combining them? On the one hand, Gramscian hegemony significantly contributes to de-fetishizes subsumption. Both as a periodizing tool (e.g. Camatte 2000; and Vercellone 2007) and as a telos of capitalist colonization of social life (Debord 1966; Adorno, 1971; and Hardt and Negri 2000), subsumption tends to be theorized as a linear progression, following the narrative of primitive accumulation-formal subsumption-real subsumption. I thus reframe it as "subsumptive relations." The integration of hegemony to subsumptive relations leads to a much needed opening up and dialectization of the latter, pointing to their instability, exposure to crisis, detouring, requiring sustained reproduction, prone to negotiation— comprising coercion+consent— and even the possibility of their negation. As a result, the frame of interpretation of subsumption expands to a broader social scale – similar to the Workerist's vision of social factory (Tronti, 1963) but without the dismissal of value theory of labor and the stressing subjectivist tendencies of some Autonomia strands (Wright, 1997). On the other hand, subsumptive relations contribute to develop Gramsci's intuition expressed in the Americanismo e Fordismo fragments of Quaderni in order to bring back the materialist basis of hegemony, i.e. to grasp it in direct relation to the labor process and (surplus) value production. Furthermore, without downplaying hegemony's political side, subsumptive relations add to hegemony a perspective on capitalist abstractions, the systemic ways a

given system reproduces itself. For instance, the subsuming power of the exchange principle becomes a hegemonic socializing force: articulating commodities circulation and subjects operating within social relations of production and consumption that are both coercive and consensual, e.g. most of us need to submit to wage labor to earn money to buy commodities but our socialization through the C-M-C circuit also requires our needs, wants, and desires. Thus, subsumption in the broader social realm, both secures the valorization process through its realization and its social reproduction by producing subjects. This implies that the general principle of exchange and the liberal ideologies conveyed by 'freedom, equality, property and Bentham" (Marx 1990, p.280) become hegemonic. However, such hegemony is still unstable and susceptible to crises: the abrupt transition to remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic sheds light on the tensions between a digital technology that acts like expanding fixed capital subsuming the domestic sphere and people re-negotiating their neoliberal understanding of work and productivity.

Digitalization and green expectations: the environmental impact of NTFs

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The pandemic has generated a rethinking of languages and forms of communication. The lockdown and the social distancing have determined a decisive acceleration of the digitalization processes in various spheres of life, from social relations to work, education and consumption of art, music and fashion. At the same time, lockdown, especially in the first phase of the pandemic, has brought about a significant reduction in CO_2 levels in the air. Social network feeds were flooded with news and images of deserted but pollution-free cities, contributing in part to thinking about digitalization as a possible solution to the problem of climate change. The ability to work and attend meetings from home has certainly had an impact on reducing transportation pollution. The same dematerialization of documents has had and still has a positive influence on the saving of raw materials: many companies, belonging to sectors that until a few years ago seemed impossible to be involved in the process of digitalization of products, have followed the same path. The idea of dematerialization, associated with an ecological and green vision, has conquered many sectors, feeding the idea that digital and immaterial products have a lower impact on the environment. In this process of digitalization and dematerialization, art has been the protagonist thanks to the boom of works made in NFT (Non-Fungible Token). The situation is decidedly different from expectations: according to estimates, creating a single NFT produces, on average, as much pollution as an 800-kilometer trip in a gasoline-powered car. According to a study conducted by the University of Cambridge, the creation process of Bitcoin, one of the most widely used cryptocurrencies for NFTs, uses more electricity than countries like Argentina, Sweden or Pakistan. If art becomes immaterial, however, the means of producing art remain material, and in the case of NFTs, these are computers and servers, whose computing power is used to create or "mine" Bitcoins, but also to "mine" NFTs. Computers and servers that consume resources and produce CO_2. NFTs are likely to further exacerbate this situation unless alternatives to the current creation process are found. An example is the fashion industry, where, over the past year, the trend has been for haute couture and ready-to-wear garments to be made digitally and sold in NFTs. NFTs have also landed in the world of fashion, gaining a certain fame, especially in the luxury sector: on March 27th the first Metaverse Fashion Week took place on the Decentraland platform. Dolce and Gabbana, Etro, Elie Saab and Balenciaga paraded with their garments thanks to the collaboration with companies that deal with the creation of digital garments, then allowing users to buy them in NFT. Among the companies that took part in the event, there was The

Fabricant, whose official page headlines, "Always digital, never physical. We waste nothing but data and harness nothing but our imagination." However, for the realization and sale of each garment, a large amount of energy is required, which in turn generates significant levels of pollution. In fact, research in this regard supports the idea that digital garments may be the least polluting alternative in the fashion industry. This contribution aims to investigate the environmental impact of the use of NFTs in the art and fashion industry, moving from the current panorama, it intends to open a reflection showing how the functioning of blockchain technology has an environmental impact.

Figures of divergence. Experiences of subjugation, migration and distress and the definition of a new project of coexistence

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This proposal offers some reflections about key themes in socio-spatial research starting from media/communication analysis intended as a practice able to situate communication and media research within the dynamics of socio-spatial forces, linking them to questions about social conflict, identity, order, power and spatial design. Two case studies are analyzed and related. The first case-study is Tre Titoli, a 2015 "participatory" film by Italian artist and director Nico Angiuli, which reflects on issues of rural workers' rights. The film's storyline addresses the circumstances of African and Italian agricultural laborers' in Cerignola through the biography and political thinking of the syndicalist labor union leader, Giuseppe Di Vittorio. What Angiuli did in Tre Titoli is an attempt to redefine the relationship between visual arts and public space trying to deconstruct the concept of public space as entirely defined by social cohesion, integration and consensus. In particular this film reconceptualizes Western rural contexts as unequal socio-spatial ecologies in which value creation practices occur through fractures, wounds, that can be more or less sutured but never completely erased. Mexrissey. The second case-study is the redefinition of the English singer Morrisey as an "icon" in Latinxs contexts, in particular, in Californian rural places surrounding the Bay Area, such as Stockton. This phenomenon led to the formation of the band Mexrissey, a collective comprised of musicians which is famous for their renditions of melodramatic and sad music by Morrissey. The analysis of this phenomena allows us to follow the persistent lure of negative feeling, in particular "misery," "melancholy," and "depression" within Latinxs cultural production, reception, and spectatorship. How do geographic, psychic, and musical misery connect at this junction? These feelings are essential to expanding our understanding of the physical and psychic landscapes in which rural Latinxs subjects dwell in North America. Melancholy remains an understudied analytic in relationship to Latinxs subjects in particular, and if we choose Morrissey's music to explore the potentialities of Latinxs melancholia it is because Morrissey's music allows Latinxs to articulate their depressive feelings through and beyond the cultural confines of "Latinidad" itself" by choosing the sonic call of annihilation. The analysis of these two case studies allows us, on one side, to investigate some transnational socio-spatial processes in Western contexts highlighting in particular the 'crisis of presence', as Ernesto de Martino would say, in certain rural contexts. On the other side it allows us to think in innovative terms around a new "project of coexistence" capable of rethinking the interaction and conflict between differences, between different ecologies, spatial production practices, imaginaries, forms of dwelling. Starting from questions and issues identified in the two case-studies, the possibilities and limits of a "coexistence project" can be discussed by making operational some specific categories or figures of decolonial thinking such as "border thinking", "opacity", "divergence" and "fragment".

Labor Productivity: The Link Between Use-value, Value, and Information

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The labor theory of value lifts the veil of capitalist production and shows how a surplus is extracted; the difference between the value produced by wage laborers and the wages paid. Wages that reflect the labor necessary for a minimum level of sustenance to continue working on a regular schedule and the generational reproduction of the working class, but not the full measure of the labor-power expended during a typical working day. Given these circumstances, the incentive for the capitalist is to maximize surplus value. One approach to achieve maximization of surplus value is enhancement of productivity of labor. Productivity of labor is determined amongst other things by the workers' average degree of skill, the level of development of science and its technological application, the social organization of the process of production, the extent and effectiveness of the means of production, and the conditions found in the natural environment (Marx et al. 1990, 130). In other words, by changing the concrete conditions of production that impact concrete labor. Once changed, these conditions affect the deployment of abstract human labor in the form of the socially necessary labor needed to produce relative surplus value. The implication is that the greater the productivity of labor the greater the production of use-values as commodities, and the less the value of the commodities due to the reduced labor time socially necessary for their production. This implied relationship, between the productivity of labor, use-value, and value, may be evaluated by examining the process of generation of relative surplus value. The purpose of this paper is to examine relative surplus value by considering enhancement of the productivity of labor as an info-autopoietic process (Cárdenas-García 2020), or process of information self-production; a sensory commensurable, self-referential, interactive feedback process immanent to Bateson's difference which makes a difference (Bateson 1978, 453). This is the key to finding a relationship between labor and information, to close the supposed gap that exists in explaining economic production due to the advent of information science in the middle of the 20th century. For this purpose, the paper is divided into several sections. First, a review of the labor theory of value is undertaken to develop an initial classical graphical description of the generation of absolute surplus value and relative surplus value. Second, an algebraic approach is implemented to explain absolute surplus value and relative surplus value with the intent of generalization. Third, the algebraic incorporation of productivity of labor in the labor theory of value allows a discernment of how the valorization process works in the generation of relative surplus value. The result is an increased production of use-values as commodities, while at the same time reducing the value of the commodities due to the reduced labor time socially necessary for their production. Fourth, the process of info-autopoiesis or information self-production; a sensory commensurable, self-referential feedback process immanent to Gregory Bateson's difference which makes a difference is introduced. The role of info-autopoiesis is shown to be a fundamental element in the metabolic connection of humankind with nature. Fifth, the immanent Page 2 connection between productivity of labor and information is expressed by a parallel algebraic approach emphasizing info-autopoiesis as part of the labor process. Last, a comparison between the productivity of labor enhancement approach and the info-autopoiesis approach shows them to be equivalent constructs leading to the realization of relative surplus value as an inevitable consequence of the immanence of information and productivity of labor. The relevance of Gramsci for the study of communication and society today will be addressed within the info-autopoietic frame of reference introduced in this presentation.

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Shifting images in the integral state: A Gramscian perspective on Italy-China relations in pandemic times

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When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in Wuhan in January 2020, European countries looked at these developments as a still external phenomenon. Yet swift shifts in the global geography of contagion soon created unexpected parallels between most affected regions – such as between China's Hubei and Italy's Lombardy, respectively. These contagion dynamics unleashed controversial processes of identification vs othering, solidarity vs rejection, inclusion vs exclusion in Italy-China relations that are still largely unexplored. Research work on pandemic-related discursive struggles has namely focused both on 'hegemonic narratives' in China's reaction to the pandemic (Saratchand & Kaur 2021) and on its peculiar 'campaign' and 'policy-style' (Cai et al. 2020; Mei 2020). However, an external perspective on China is still largely absent. The present study aims at filling this gap. To this end, it sheds light on the impact of the pandemic on Italy-China relations by foregrounding the complexity and diversity of China's images emerged in Italy across a variety of fields and actors. Which images of China feature the discursive struggles in Italy's pandemic-ridden political and civil society? Do they diverge across various (political, economic, health and cultural/artistic) fields? With which implications for ongoing diplomatic, political, and economic bilateral relations? Antonio Gramsci's legacy, it is argued in the study, is crucial to make sense of the above research questions. At theoretical level, the present contribution thus advances a Gramscian perspective of analysis and explores its added value in the study of pandemic-related discursive disruptions in Italy's integral state as the dialectical interpenetration of the country's political and civil society. The study will particularly focus on the non-neutrality of civil society and on the multiplicity of intellectuals – in the broad Gramscian sense – involved during the pandemic in the (re)production of knowledge and meaning making across sites and scales (government, political parties, business and financial actors, employer associations, trade unions, scientific community, press, social media, cultural organizations…). Methodologically, the study draws on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003) as a valuable entry point into major pandemic-related discursive disruptions. To this end, it embeds Faircloughian sensitivity to the tripartite analysis of texts, discursive practices, and social practices within a Gramscian-inspired study of more overarching struggles for hegemony (Caterina 2019) characterized by the complex intermeshing of – discursive and material – reactions at political, economic, diplomatic, and cultural level. Potential results are expected to reinstate the centrality Italy-China relations in the current scenario. They will provide key insights on the alternation of politicization and naturalization of the 'China issue' in Italian politics, thus contributing to ongoing discussions on several topical issues: from Italy's controversial adhesion – as the first G7 country to date – to Xi Jinping's 'Belt and Road Initiative' and the still unexplored links between Italy's populist course and its foreign policy trajectory, up to China's oscillations between 'mask' and 'wolf warrior' diplomacy. The implications of the envisaged study are manifold. Empirically, enlarging the geographical scope of the original research interest can pave the way for further Gramscian-inspired analyses of China's bilateral relations worldwide. Yet, at a more fundamental theoretical and methodological level, the present contribution might also contribute to fostering a new era characterized by increased philological awareness in the Chinese reception of Gramsci's textual legacy (Caterina 2021). The present study is namely part of a more overarching research project hosted by the Huazhong University of Science and Technology Wuhan and will disseminate its results to show the enduring relevance of a Gramscian outlook in making sense of the current pandemic scenario, therefore adding to the internationalization and cross-disciplinarity of Gramsci's reception in Mainland China.

Physical and emotional exhaustion, overwork and the Covid-19 pandemic: an investigation among the university administrative and academic staff

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The Covid-19 pandemic, from its outbreak to its evolution in the last two years, has strongly impacted the working methods and the perception of the workload within universities, both for academic and administrative personnel (Ghislieri et al., 2022). On the one hand, the situation and perception of uncertainty generated by the crisis was combined with the need to rapidly change working methods and spaces, and by the advent of forms of remote working that led to the emergence of new, potential issues - such as the lack of separation between living and working space and the extension of working hours (Kiffin et al., 2021; Wang et al. 2021). On the other hand, the pandemic may have exacerbated pre-existing difficulties, related for example to the work-life balance (Vaziri et al., 2020), the necessity to maintain constant productivity and the high levels of cognitive demands (Dolce et al., 2020), and the tendency to overwork and being emotionally and psychologically dependent from work (Molino et al., 2019). In this context, phenomena such as physical and emotional exhaustion, technology-related stress and the development of related disorders are increasing among workers (Molino et al., 2020; Mihalca et al., 2021). The impact may have been different both according to the specific tasks and work areas, and with reference to the gender identity of the individual workers. In this framework, our aim is to examine whether and how the pandemic in its various stages has affected the perceived workload and level of exhaustion of university staff. We also try to investigate whether there is a relationship between forms of remote work and the increase in this level of exhaustion and the development of psycho-physical disorders. In answering the previous questions, our study aims to pay particular attention to any differences related to gender and to the nature of the work of university staff, whether administrative or academic. To do this, we examine the data collected from the administrative and academic staff of the Polytechnic University of Turin (Politecnico di Torino). Between the end of 2020 and the first months of 2021, the staff of the university was administered a survey aimed at investigating the reaction of the university workplace and the perceived work well-being in the context of the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. A mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative analysis is used to answer our questions and to draw a complete picture of the response of university staff to the change imposed by the pandemic. The results indicate medium to elevated levels of perception of physical and mental exhaustion by the staff, with slightly more worrying results for academic staff. The latter also seems more exposed to the development of emotional dependence on work, inability to detach from work and workaholism. Across the personnel, there are gender differences in the perceived development of specific psycho-physical disorders, such as insomnia. There is also a low perceived ability to manage physical and mental fatigue with respect to emergency and prevention behaviors, transversal to the categories taken into consideration. Although forms of alternation between remote and in presence work have been indicated as the most optimal, results indicate a potential correlation between exhaustion, psychophysical disorders, and teleworking.

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A critical exploration of Youtube texts by and about people with disabilities in South Africa

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The work by intellectuals such as Marx and gramsci has been extensively employed in the study of social inequalities across contexts and in relation to different dimensions. As one of the most unequal societies in the World, South Africa provides a number of past and recent examples of discrimination, oppression and violence on the basis of race, gender, socio-economic and migrant status, political affiliation etc. Despite their continued marginalisation during and after apartheid and despite accounting for a substantial portion (7.5%) of the population, people with disabilities appear relatively neglected in scholarly and media debates. The booming Internet and mobile penetration, which promised to give a voice to the voiceless, increasingly seem to reproduce and at times exacerbate such marginalisation. By drawing on Gramsci's notions of hegemony and public intellectuals, in this paper I explore discoursive constructions by and about South Africans with disabilities on Youtube. Videos and comments are purposively selected from three active channels based on their relevance and are quantitatively as well as qualitatively analysed. The first objective of the study is to understand disability in relation to other dimensions of diversity, e.g. race or gender. Given the intersectional nature of disability, this is particularly important in the South african context where online as well as offline experiences are still profoundly shaped by the legacy of past institutional segregation and discrimination. The second objective is to recognise disability as part of a complex and multi-faceted online persona. The digital space enables people to either hide their disability or bring it to the fore,, but it remains to be understood to what extent this is an autonomous and conscious choice as opposed to a defensive strategy or an expected form of activism or awareness rasing. The third objective is to recognise, as much as can be gauged from Youtube comments, the extent to which people with disabilities are constructed according to established media tropes. Compliments and praise in particular can represent covert forms of victim commiseration or hero glorification thus reproducing tragic narratives and setting low expectations. The anticipated findings are that past and present social inequalities significantly shape to what extent and in what way people with disabilities are visible and viewed online. Despite progressive policies and a vibrant civil society preventing overt discrimination, as cultural media texts Youtube videos and comments are expected to reveal hegemonic ableist tendencies and internalised forms of oppression. Reflections on the process promise to highlight some limitations of Western critical thought in a quintessential post-colonial context.

The resilience of an "autonomous digital public sphere": investigation perspectives

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Problems relating to data processing and the "infodemic" that accompanied the health emergency (World Health Organization 2020), with the consequent worsening of polarization dynamics, the spread of misinformation, and media-manipulation have made the need for a longitudinal and interdisciplinary study of this phenomenon particularly urgent. Indeed, conscious, and creative thinking that can guide the operations of governance is now paramount. Even though the need for revision theories and founding concepts in the field of communication research has been at the center of the scholarly debate for some time due to the emergence of hyper- personalized forms of communication based on "datafication", the research about the detrimental effects of personalization is more often inconsistent, but there is no doubt that in the long run the algorithmic capacity to govern our lives in increasingly sophisticated ways will dramatically expand. During the process of the digital metamorphosis of the "structural power" of systemic constraints, the activation of communication processes and attention to the forms of rationality of understanding can be antidotes to the sophistication of the center. A close investigation of the new communication dynamics is, therefore, considered necessary to outline the real possibilities of resistance of spaces "from below" as well as the effectiveness of the regulatory strategies put in place by public actors to protect an "autonomous public sphere" which, according to the Habermasian ideal, is capable of communicatively exerting a critical influence over the institutions of the center, while legitimizing their power. The key role played by on-line platforms in the neo-intermediation of the public debate, the digital metamorphosis of the structural power of the new systemic constraints require to review the current tools for investigation and to map the information eco-system, highlighting the political nature of such analysis: it all reconstructs relations of authority, creates new political entities, and establishes novel interpretative frameworks. A cross-disciplinary approach is necessary to develop adequate regulatory proposals and draw the attention of researchers to the ethical challenges underlying the functioning of dating, commodification, and selection algorithms. Indeed, these are analytical prisms that help us understand the way in which the ecosystem modifies power relations. In this scenario, the research goal is twofold: to provide a synoptic framework of the current European regulator interventions on the the social and legal accountability of the Large on-line Platforms (LOPs or gatekeeper companies (cfr. Digital Service and Digital Market Act, Data Governance Act, COM 2020 825/842/767) as "neo-intermediaries" of public communication on the one hand, and on the other hand to study the related impact on the "state of health" of the digital ecosystem through the perspective of audiences as a hermeneutic approach. The first phase of analysis, mainly based on the criterion of overall expansiveness of the tactics of governance, the tendency of Member Countries and European Union to move along three politic paradigm will be assessed: The "Industry Self-regulation"; The "Limited government Regulation" that includes the models of "Accountability co-decided" and" Accountability set by law" and among which the French (see organic law 18/1201), German approach (see Network Enforcement Act, 2017); The "Comprehensive government regulation" or "Structuralist regulation" that attempt to reorganize the entire system with the aim of fixing the causes of the dysfunction and not just mitigating the symptoms, limiting the very structure and business models of on-line platforms by altering the dynamics of the markets in which they operate. The second phase will be a critical and empirical impact analysis of the intervention strategies implemented by the European Institutions: from the Code of Practice of Disinformation (CPD), to the GDPR 679/2016 on privacy and its evolution in the light of the currently proposed European regulations: the Data Governance Act, the Digital Service Act (DSA), and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). We will try to evaluate the feasibility of a Social Platforms Accountability (SPA) system based on the optional division of responsibility between the user and the social platform, whereby platforms responsibility is removed in the case of the secure identification of the content producer. In order to avoid a drift toward censorship, a regulation of re-intermediation based on a division of responsibility between user and platforms,

is desirable. This will exempt platforms from supervision and, therefore, their power-duty censorship regarding "sensitive" content in the event of the secure identification of the user and the relative assumption of legal liability on the part of the latter. The hypothesis supported here is based on a choice of identification and seems to be able to guarantee a relationship based on transparency and accountability between user and platform. The ultimate step is to evaluate the possible consequences of regulatory interventions on the phenomenon of "dataism" that is the gradual normalization of datafication as a new paradigm in science and society. Approaches based on technological solutionism, like the " Limited Government Regulation" would not address regulatory issues inherent to fundamental problems, depoliticizing structural phenomena such as dataism and surveillance with active marginalization, even on an imaginal level, of possibilities of likely alternatives. Using the concept of "surveillance realism" as a meta-perspective- the "pervasive atmosphere", similar to that described by Fischer in relation to "capitalist realism"- we'll try also to interpret the impact of such models of governance on the new collective imagination and the new frames of meaning that have accompanied the advent of the pandemic as a "total social fact", opening the way to the prospect of possible alternatives for the future of communication and indeed, democracies.

El Pais and the Catalan Challenge: Managing Political Pressure as a form of Expertise

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Traditionally a center-left daily, El País, one of Europe's most prestigious legacy papers, positioned itself as a strong and uncompromising voice against Catalan secessionism, mirroring the official position of the Spanish conservative government and Monarchy and surprising many observers. Moreover, El Pais terminated its collaboration with a range of contributors who had expressed skepticism of the governmental line, in what many saw as a sign of unprecedented political tensions within the newsroom. Using a field theory approach, this paper seeks to unearth the structural origins of these political tensions and in the process explores how journalists use their expertise to translate these pressures into the logic of the journalistic field. The article applies a second-hand ethnography, using two dozen interviews with current and former journalists and editors at El País who recount how the Catalan crisis posed a challenge to their journalistic expertise. It demonstrates that much of the newsroom saw El Pais' uncompromising line as incompatible with the tradition of the paper and as creating serious challenges to their professional credibility by stretching the limits of acceptable political pressure. The implications of this study are as follows: a) In spite of journalistic autonomy being central to journalists' public legitimation as experts, in practice they constantly deal with political pressure and view this as an integral part of their job. This means the management of political pressure is an intimate aspect of their journalistic expertise, one built in interaction with colleagues, sources, superiors and subordinates. The implication is that our definitions of journalistic expertise should grapple with this contradiction between how journalistic expertise is publicly legitimated and how it is exerted in practice by integrating the management of political pressure as an integral aspect of the profession, even in liberal democracies; b) editors emerge as mediators between the field of power and the field of journalism, translating external pressure into mostly professional advice in the newsroom. However, in times of political crisis this pressure can become too overt, resulting in a breakdown of journalist's ability to preserve their professional identity and project it to the public. Nevertheless, journalists consistently engage in strategies of resistance as a way of preserving their professional self-image. c) In the case of El Pais' coverage of the Catalan crisis, pressure was applied in a manner that journalists often perceived as excessive and unprofessional. Most notably, this contributed to discrediting the Editor-in-chief, underscoring how the inability to exert political pressure in a 'professional' manner can affect the credibility of established hierarchies within the newsroom.

Cultural Hegemony in the Aesthetic of Musical AI

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The nature of algorithms as structures of power has been widely studied in sociology, as different authors concerned themselves with unveiling the bias present in the datasets that feed the algorithms themselves. Different contributions focused on how structures of oppression such as racism, misogyny, homophobia, classism entered the codes used for algorithms, regardless of their assumed neutrality. Nevertheless, even the most balanced dataset, being a mirror of reality, confirms structures of power already present in society. Aim of this project is to focus on a different aspect regarding the data in algorithms, namely the construction of a cultural hegemony of aesthetics in art and in music in particular. By analysing the affordances of popular AI music generator services for creative industries Amper, AIVA and Ecrett we seek to understand the boundaries in which users have to move when using these tools. As part of our field study, we composed some musical pieces using these tools, with the intent of pushing the boundaries set by the affordances. Through this experimental approach it was possible to analyse the hegemonic sense of aesthetic in the platform and the musical results, the possible counterhegemonic practices in music making and the limits set by the AI in challenging the hegemony, due to the choice of data and the affordances set by the programmers Early results show that the softwares analysed have different affordances and set different limits to user expression. However, in all of their codes there was little space for the use of instruments or musical scales that aren't expressions of the Western aesthetic sense in music. Even if these softwares allow some users freedom in composing, the final result seems to be always constructed on the basis of the Western musical tradition.

Home alone with the media: The impact of government dominated media communications on voters in the 2022 Hungarian Parliamentary elections

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The parliamentary elections in Hungary in April 2022 brought a compelling majority for the ruling party Fidesz and the incumbent Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán. On election day (April 3, 2022) the voting process was closely scrutinized. In every polling district in the country, independent, voluntary, civic vote counters, mobilized primarily by the opposition parties, took part in the process of ballot counting, consequently confirming that the voting procedure abode to the rules, and direct interference to the results did not take place. The international observers of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, however, raised that 'the process was marred by the pervasive overlapping of government and ruling coalition's messaging that blurred the line between state and party, as well as by media bias and opaque campaign funding

(OSCE report, 2022). According to our hypothesis, strict control over public service media and dominant indirect ownership of private media (Hermann, Chomsky, 1988) by the regime led to hegemonic government agenda setting (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) and framing (Entman, 1993) during the election campaign. Ultimately, dominant government influence on media played a fundamental role in the outcome of the elections. We argue that three sociodemographic variables of media users were key for the major impact and efficiency of regime propaganda. The elderly, less educated voters, living in rural villages and towns, faced unchallenged exposure to government and Fidesz party messaging. Many of these voters had lost their spouses, lacking the possibility to discuss electoral options at home. Also, most of them are not internet users. The intensity of government communications created a massive filter bubble (Pariser, 2011; Bozdag & Van den Hoven 2015), eliminating the possibility for alternative messages reaching these voters. We argue that dominant media ownership, hegemonic messaging and structural censorship regarding alternative messages, in combination with the unchallenged possibilities to agenda setting and issue framing led to a structurally dominant voice of Fidesz in the election campaign. Media dominance was a major factor in influencing voter behaviour and, consequently, securing a majority for the ruling party. Our research builds on an innovative triangulation of three research methods. First, we conduct a qualitative textual analysis of the memoirs summarising the personal observations of independent ballot counters. Two major Facebook pages systematically collect and publish hundreds of such memoirs. The focus is on the account of those who visited voters with health or mobility issues in their homes, providing mobile ballot box voting opportunity. These visits often included interaction with the voters and these accounts therefore serve as a massive database of participant observation . In the analysis, we focus on information concerning media use of the voters. Second, semi-structured online or personal interviews are made with selected mobile ballot box providers. The focus of the interviews is to determine patterns of media mechanisms and impact through identifying audio-visual, verbal or interpersonal clues about media presence and their impact. Third, we intend to explore voter motivation through semi-structured online or personal interviews with a small sample of elderly voters and identify the media patterns that had influenced their decision. With both groups, high standards of research ethics are ensured by conducting strictly anonymous interviews. Our research will contribute to a better understanding of the mechanism and impact of media communication based on securitisation, explore the impact of lack of objective and balanced information on making choices, and will scrutinise the conflict between government media control and democratic election principles.

Epistemic media and critical knowledge about the self: Thinking about algorithms with Habermas

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One good reason to think about digital media as socially transformative is their ability, indeed propensity, to create new knowledge. The knowledge that digital media create – algorithmically rendered from users' data – is not merely a commodity sold to third-party actors (Andrejevic 2012; Fisher 2015; Fuchs and Fisher 2015; Scholz 2013; Zuboff 2020); but also makes part and parcel of digital media, underlying and enabling its function. As knowledge becomes not just the end-product of a system but also its condition of possibility, the very nature and function of knowledge in society also changes. What changes is how we know and what it means to know. Digital platforms, dedicated to anything from retailing and streaming to dating and navigating, are now acting primarily as major epistemic sites, devices for the production and collection of data, and their processing into knowledge. This technological

drive toward Knowing Machines (MacKenzie 1996) and Knowing Capitalism (Thrift 2005) has been primarily propelled by personalization. This is, arguably, the epistemic essence of digital media, what makes such media new: their ability to create personal knowledge about their audience and provide them with targeted information, be it movie recommendations on Netflix, navigational instructions on Waze, or advertisements. The generalized, homogenous audience of mass media has become the personalized users of digital media. As individuals use platforms (leaving a plethora of data traces), they also become known to them. But a less straightforward process also takes place: as this knowledge about users is reflected back at them, it also informs their knowledge about themselves. An ever more intimate relationship is knitted with epistemic threads between humans and machines, as users' knowledge about the world and about their own self is mediated by digital platforms in real time and performatively (Afriat et al. 2020; Bucher 2012). A cybernetic feedback loop between a knowing machine and a knowing human, mediated by personal data and creating personalized knowledge, is a striking epistemic novelty: it changes how we know ourselves, and what knowing oneself entails. Digital platforms can, therefore, be understood as knowledge devices, or epistemic media, which translate users' data-producing behavior into an image of their self, of who they are in terms of personality, interests, habits, tastes, worldviews, and so forth. To grasp the significance of digital media as epistemic devices – devices conducive to the production of knowledge – this article offers an analysis based on a historical-comparative approach to media. Such an approach allows highlighting both the continuities in media as epistemic devices and the radical transformations which digital media bring about. To compare old and new media, and indeed diverse media forms and practices, we suggest the notion of epistemic media as a shared analytical coordinate. This notion highlights the epistemic functions (whether implicit or explicit) of media, which act not only to register and communicate existing information over space and time but also to facilitate the creation of new knowledge. This new knowledge emerges from a triad consisting of media forms, media practices, and human agents. And it is this particular triad which has given us historically new ways of knowing the self, through critical distance and self-reflection, the result of which was subjectivity. Such a feat was not technologically determined but presupposed particular historical contingencies. The history of media is dotted with contingencies of media forms and practices that facilitated the emergence of modern subjectivity as a historically specific way of knowing oneself. Digital media are the latest reiteration of such epistemic media history. But as much as they continue this history and its relations to self-knowledge, they also constitute a radical break in this history, consequential for the relations between media and subjectivity in contemporary culture. Whereas old epistemic media facilitated the formation of subjectivity through the creation of reflective knowledge about the self (i.e. knowledge of the self about the self), digital media attempts to do away with self-reflection and present to the self non-reflective knowledge about itself. This undermines the formation of subjectivity. Elucidating the shift from (old) epistemic media as allowing a space for expanding the scope of subjectivity, to (digital) epistemic media as contracting this scope is the purpose of this article. In it, we (1) suggest to think about media as epistemic devices, which have been central to the construction of subjectivity in the West; (2) present current research on algorithmic knowledge in diverse media environments, highlighting why algorithmic devices should be thought of as epistemic media; (3) with the help of Habermas's (1972) theory of knowledge, argue that the type of knowledge that algorithms create is different from previous epistemic media and is less likely to support a process of subjectivity formation; (4) conclude with the argument that as epistemic media, digital platforms work toward turning subjective and inter-subjective knowledge into objective one, excluding reflection from the process of self-knowing, thereby leading to knowledge about the self which is uncritical, and which undermines the project of subjectivization.

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The Enaction of the Conflict: an agitprop narrative

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In the context of studies on hybrid wars (Nemeth, 2002; Bunker, Heal, 2014) – with particular reference to the information war between Ukraine and Russia (2014-2022) – this paper aims at investigating the recourse to fictional narrative constructions for propagandistic-military purposes by the actors involved, mainly disseminated in the infosphere through social networks. Already defined by Tolz and Teper (2018) as agitainment, in fact, this phenomenon appears as the most recent evolution of a precise narrative genre, which dates back to the agitprop theatre of the early twentieth century (Brown, 2013), characterized by the use of theatrical actions disguised as real situations, staged in extemporaneous and crowded places, by actors/agitators before an audience unaware of being participants in a performative act. In these actions, the use of recursive narrative schemes and structures, adapted to different situations and mostly characterized by radical emotional and ethical polarizations – which, in turn, were based on opposing political visions – was accompanied by the active involvement of the spectators, in the role of helpers of the hero or antagonist, by virtue of the actors' continuous call to action. Indeed, precisely in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, some analysts (Veebel, 2015; Pikulicka-Wilczewska, Sakwa, 2015; Sazonov, Mölder, Müür, Saumets, 2017) have noted common constants in the communicative processes of opposing propagandas, conveyed by social media, including: the construction or selection of places of representation for the purposes of staging the conflict ¬– what we might call the set of the narrative; the systematic recourse to precise narrative frames and recursive characters, on which to graft different surface plots, which in turn draw their own raw material from reality; a mimetic superimposition of emotionally engaging, ethically polarized and politically delineated narratives that interact, through different narrative codes, with the cultural geography (Toal, 2017) of the different audiences involved, composed of a dense web of deep, ideological and identity narratives, not always clearly identifiable, also in relation to the interconnected digital space in which the conflict takes place; finally, the use of communicative processes characterized by a high rate of audience involvement. Using the Greimasian narratological paradigm (Greimas, 1975), a number of cases of narratives propagated during the conflict will be presented in order to highlight the mechanisms of public involvement and the dynamics of interaction between different codes and narratives. A transdisciplinary study of information wars is becoming increasingly necessary in order to construct paradigms for the identification of hostile information actions that are capable of causing an alteration in the collective perception of the conflict itself and of social reality.

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Adapting to imaginal realities: Visible urban climate futures between planning and popular discourse

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The presentation will be based on my Ph.D. research which critically analyzes digital-media visualizations of urban climate futures developed and used in urban climate adaptation, planning, and development processes: model-based simulations, games, augmented-reality apps, explainers, marketing clips, impact films, and others. On the one hand, these visible urban climate futures will be conceptualized as operationally-embedded products of data-based, (audio-)visual communication, on the other hand, in a broader sense, as concrete materializations of climate-cultural, social imagination. Operating in transformative processes, they structure knowledge, action, and decision-making, help to translate global complexities, goals, and questions of justice into local contexts, and thus influence the material realities and discourses of communities and societies in their specific adaptation to the consequences of human-made climate change. My research focuses on the technical-economic conditions and practices of their production, their operational embeddedness into concrete planning and decision-making processes, and their aesthetic and contextual relationship to the popular urban climate discourse: how and by whom are they produced? Which cultural knowledge do they carry and convey in which way, and which actions do they enable? What role and influence do they have in concrete processes of urban planning, which interests do they serve, and which perspectives do they highlight or neglect? Triangulating media dramaturgical, media ethnographic, and discourse-analytical approaches, my research on the one hand aims at gaining critical, practice-related knowledge about forms and impact potentials of digital-media future visualizations in the field of urban climate adaptation. On the other hand, it considers itself (in a broader sense) a media-cultural study of adaptation practices and capacities in the context of the socio-ecological and economic crisis. The practice-related, operational focus is concerned with questions of urban climate justice, in the sense that visualizations of urban climate futures are not only preconditions for sustainable or transformative planning, but also fundamentally political by potentially making (in)visible different perspectives, groups, areas, inequalities, and sites of conflict. Against this background, the different dimensions of urban climate justice (distributive, procedural, recognitional, generational, interspecies) form a critical-normative perspective on urban planning that can be used to analyze the production, design, and operational embedding of visible urban climate futures. The cultural focus is concerned with the ontological-material status of the analyzed futures between cultures of prediction, climate cultures, and capitalist realism. Coming from a Marxist and critical theory perspective, the main questions here are how these visualizations – by claiming to represent 'the future' – are entangled with neoliberal ideology, and how a critical perspective on these visualizations may also serve emancipatory practices of visualizing, transforming, and adapting to urban climate futures. The presentation will briefly introduce my approach, discuss the current state of my project, and present preliminary findings from selected case studies.

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Hegemony, Public Sphere and New Media Social Networks: Critical Perspectives

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Started in Birmingham in the late 1950's, the cultural studies project had a two-way relationship with Gramsci's concept of hegemony, mostly articulated within the first and second generation of critically oriented cultural and media theoreticians (most of all, Hall and Williams). On the one hand, the cultural studies re-articulation of mentioned concept has returned broader theoretical and research attention to the importance of Gramsci's legacy and reaffirmed it. On the other side, and even more important, the concept of hegemony has enabled cultural studies to treat culture as a field of conflicts between different power forces of society. At the same time, this kind of the "turn" opened up perspectives for media studies, within Birmingham Center, for understanding and critical articulation of the media institutions roles, as well as their importance in promoting ideologies, establishing power relations in society, and creating social consent – i.e. general "common sense consensus". In order to make these perspectives more comprehensive – in terms of the historical development of the concept named hegemony – it is necessary to shortly recall and point out the importance of Marx's The Eighteent Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, a remarkable piece of political journalism, for Gramsci's work. Gramsci's major improvement on Marx's The Eighteent Brumaire model was to expand the political role of "intellectuals" as "class representatives". In the context of British cultural/media studies and its relation to the concept of hegemony, important reaches were made by Williams, who developed his socio-cultural forms (dominant, residual, emergent), as well as by Hall with his influential encoding/decoding model, and especially in his conception of articulation. My idea is to confront the problem of hegemony with the concept of the public sphere, which was originally treated, within media and communication studies, in the domain of Habermas' critical theory of society. Well known is that Habermas' model of the "public sphere" 2 concerned the classical heritage of European Enlightenment history, meaning the intertwining of the press, public spaces and belonging common debates in shaping specific types of "imagined community" (Benedict Anderson), as nation. Some theorists have already used the concept of hegemony to redress Habermas' original model. Such is, for example, the theory by Nancy Fraser (multiple publics model based in "subaltern counter-publics"). So, how to treat the concepts of hegemony and the public sphere in our time, which is strongly marked with modern digital-communication media forms and related political and economic spheres? Therefore, some of the questions that will be dealing are the following: if we agree that Gramsci's hegemony is still undeniably important concept for critical analysis of contemporary culture, society and media, what are appropriate approaches to read, understand, and apply that concept nowadays, taking into consideration the conditions of a rather radically transformed public sphere in the era of new media social networks? More specifically, how does hegemony work in the context of a "broken" public sphere, for example within the models of new media social network such as "echo chambers" or "twitter tweets" communication? What are the achievements of classically understood hegemony in the current historical circumstances of new types of media institutions, their complex ownership structures and capitalist media

markets that we are witnessing today? What is the relationship between hegemony and "counter-hegemony", given the existing economic, political and social power and importance of new media social networks.

Media Space and Urban Space: looking for a constructive and renewed interplay

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The emphasis of Sociology of Communication on the virtual world and its devaluation of physical dimension has caused its progressive separation from the Urban Sociology since the beginning of 2000s. Such a divorce has weakened both disciplines which, since the dawn of sociological thought, had always been connected in an often inextricable way. In fact, Sociology of Communication developed at the beginning of the twentieth century actually by observing the metropolitan crowds and their relationship with the first mass media; in addition, the first great theorist of the Digital Information Society, Manuel Castells, was born just as urban sociologist. This gradual divergence between the two disciplines prevents us to fully understand some of the communication drifts, currently detectable in the digital media (platform society, echo chambers, filter bubbles among all). They had instead been anticipated just by the urban transformations, occurred between the 50s and the 90s especially in the United States, and already identified in the 1930s by the Chicago School. In the transition to the digital media, Sociology of Communication, engaged in introducing discontinuity with the past, has increasingly coincided with Internet studies; for this reason, it has overlooked some elements of continuity as the suburbanization, the urban polarization, the affirmation of urban consumer ethos which, concealed, were acting powerfully in the current web configuration. As a result, Sociology of Communication was not completely able to understanding certain network drifts such as echo chambers and filter bubbles: trends that precisely urban sociology and anthropology, the theory of architecture, and sociology of imaginary had somehow anticipated in their research during the '80s-'90s. Urban Sociology, on the other hand, apart from the great reflection on global cities - a model of urban platform society on a world scale - has often limited itself to the close reading of individual city realities by neglecting the context transformations, especially in the communication field. The paper aims at showing how there has been a sort of transfer, of "dripping", to put it as Simmel, from the metropolitan reconfiguration taking place in the second half of the twentieth century to the current web design, based on platformization. In addition, it explores how the advent of platform society and social media had been prepared by at least half a century of suburbanization, linked to the algorithms of consumption, profiling and urban spaces control. Finally, it points out some perspectives of recomposition between Urban Sociology and Sociology of Communication, for example, in researching on citizens' participatory movements in urban spaces, and the strategic growth of third sector organizations and economies.

The End of Ideology in Left Theory? Blind Spots of Contemporary Platform Economic Analysis

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Be it Nick Srniceks Platform Capitalism, Philip Staabs Digitaler Kapitalismus or more recent analysis of Jodi Dean, one notices that once important Marxists concepts like ideology and hegemony are only attributed a minor role (if any) when contemporary forms of rule and power are analyzed. Srnicek dismisses the problem of ideology out of hand in the introduction of his prominent book. Staab considers it only so far as it becomes a reproach against theorists, who still conceptualize the contemporary economic state as "neoliberalism". Given the all-encompassing power of a few corporations having that much unchecked influence on politics, the market and our daily lives, one would have to be pretty convinced of the neoliberal neutral market - and rags to riches ideology, so Staab argument goes, as not to see that the gap between ideology and empirical evidence has widened enormously and beyond a point where any serious academic couldn't acknowledge it. It's cases like these, when ideology is so over the top, ridiculous even, considering the given reality, in which Adorno denied that one could even talk about ideology. While Adorno referred to Nazism, modern-day ideology skeptics refer to Platform Capitalism. Its alleged neofeudalizing tendencies and the direct dependencies of domination that come with it, make the mediating role of the "superstructure" (if one still cares for the dialectic) neglectable. What is there to be mediated when the power relations are so plain to see? These, however, seem to be revenants of the same kind of ideology critiques that Stuart Hall polemized against. The movement of this form of critique was to Hall's understanding, a) an identification of the truth with a small elite of leftist academics, which made it b) quite easy to reason ad hominem against people who beg to differ, as them c) just being too illusioned by ideology. This general impetus found its way into the latest actualization of the base-superstructure discourse as well. While in the last couple of decades neoliberalism was the prime target of critique, this time capitalism itself seems to fall as a theoretical victim, to the new power of platform enterprises. The contemporary "interregnum" is thus understood to show the way to a completely new mode of production – probably something worse. Based on the assumption that there is still some truth to both, neoliberalism and capitalism, when it comes to people making sense of their lives (cf. as one example the enormous number of Social Media intellectuals, who still pray the merits of hard work and responsibility to their enormous followerships), as well as in their basic economic functioning (the mode of production is after all still following the operation of G(– W) – G' in a mostly neoliberal form) I will examine some of the most prominent economic and cultural arguments of the end of neoliberalism/capitalism thesis critically, and try to complement them with a fitting concept of ideology. Considering similarities and differences in the dismissal, the use and the conceptualizations of ideology, a coherent picture of the debate should envelop, which can be used as a basis for future analysis.

Financialization of Networked Culture: From free labour to speculative investment

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It has been explained that the notions of digital activity and digital labour are very often overlapped in network culture, as it is the very logic in which platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2016) works in the present time: human becomes human capital while human activities are automatically subsumed as 'free labour' (Terranova, 2004). According to Terranova (2004) free labour is referred to the social process in which individual and collective cultural activities is

converted to data and captivated to be reduced to economic values by digital media corporation power. This paper follows up what has been happening on digital platform since the critical recognition of labour, exemplified by various forms of digital labour (e.g. free labour, platform labour, playbour etc.). Focusing on so-called 'art-tech' or "piece-tech", which has been booming in South Korea particularly among the younger generation, this research examines the way in which 'aspirational labour' (Duffy, 2017), subcultural capital, and advanced digital technology are articulated to a form of investment in the perspective of the 'financialization of network culture' in the context of neoliberal postcapitalist society. I will investigate media and social discourse related to financialization of network culture, which are observed in journalism and social media, particularly of art/piece tech. The particular case to be discussed in the current paper is an investment platform titled Musicow. Musicow is self-identified as the "first music copyright investment platform in the world", with the advertisement slogan of "Music becomes cash cow" and "Music becomes attractive assets" (Musicow website). Musicow is known as the platform on which ordinary people can sell and buy music copyright with relatively small budget: The claim for the 'first in the world' is based on the self-rationale that apart from other similar transactions, in which only major companies can be engaged with massive capital, Musicow is open to 'everyone' whoever wants to do it with a piece-like small money for a little portion of profit. Musicow is reported to have approximately 710,000 subscribers, and the market size of transaction reaches to about 200 million $ in 2021. Musicow and other financialization of network culture like NFT commodifies fandom (Zaucha & Agur, 2022). This also converts daily life to assets through the articulation of cultural activity and speculative capital. In digital finance, not rarity but the massiveness of demands makes the financial goods more attractive (Negri, 2015). In consequence, young people (so-called MZ generation, as acronym of Millennial Z-generation) who are not only digitally savvy but also precarious in neoliberal condition are seduced to join investment business online. Financialisation of culture may look innovative but is yet highly risky. Moreover, it is the very logic of how neoliberal regime reinforces itself that emergency needs to be constantly generated to the extent that "crisis is endogenous" to its sustainability of the current social system (Negri, 2015, p. 28). This is what Negri describes as "colonizing every social space as a norm of valorization", as society is subsumed into capital and public goods into "privatization" through "financialization" (Negri, 2015). The entrepreneurial financialization of youth culture suggests that while free-labour does hardly give economic rewards as, Duffy describes (2017), "(Not) getting paid to do what you love", speculative investment may allocate users some economic profits at the cost of capturing the users' affective, cognitive, physical faculty and life itself (Foucault, 2010). Drawn upon Musicow and similar cases of financialization of culture online emerging in Korea, the paper suggests the expansion of the model of digital labour to that of financializations: that is a shift from labour to investment, from being free to having substantial dividends, from passion to speculation, and from devotion to ambition. The financialization of youth culture may be the malaise of digital culture, mushroomed in the entanglement of postcapitalist and neoliberal articulation of culture and capital, and human and money.

How do the media contribute to the debate of social conflicts and the emergence of oppositional public spaces? The contemporary civil contestations of economic development projects in France

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In France, several dozen local conflicts are currently opposing citizen groups and activists to public decision-makers, institutions and private actors. Such phenomena are neither recent nor limited to France, but on the one hand their number and their networking are increasing, and on the other hand the objects of these disputes are diversifying. In addition to major mobility infrastructures (roads and railways or air transport hubs) or energy production infrastructures (nuclear power plants, photovoltaic and wind farms), these conflicts also concern infrastructures presented as "cultural" or "creative" and intended for the economic development of territories

through their distinction and the recognition of the "innovative" dynamics that would contribute to their attractiveness. These conflicts are expressed in different arenas (legal, spatial and local geopolitical, deliberative instances), including different types of media spaces. First of all, the traditional local media, and in some cases the national media, contribute to publicizing these territorial projects and relay the claims and arguments of the actors in conflict. In this sense, the mediatization of local struggles contributes to raising public awareness of the issues raised by these oppositions, and thus to encouraging a critical look at the forms and values that guide public decision-making. Second, within activist, institutional and professional media, partisan editorial practices seek to win over public opinion as much as to federate beyond the local level. Finally, digital social networks constitute a third form of mediatization of such local conflicts, through which transfers of expertise are developed, notably between militant collectives, and local struggles resonate, contributing to their politicization on extra-local scales. This paper proposes to situate these three main types of media arenas in the context of a dozen local conflicts observed in France between 2019 and 2021. To do so, we will use conflicts related to french leisure park development projects with a cultural theme (Imagiland, Studios Occitanie, Mélofolia, D-Day Land), or leisure projects (Europacity, Wave Landes), which have in common that they are part of local strategies for building "creative" territories. In each of the cases studied, we have analyzed a corpus of press articles and institutional publications or from digital social networks, and we have also conducted interviews with representatives of the different parties in conflict. We will show in particular how the media and the mediatization participate in a more global and multiform process of politicization of these local conflicts, born primarily of feelings of threat of the framework of life of proximity. This process is articulated around a double dynamic of local anchoring of actors and paradigms of economic development that are global and bear a hypermodernist dynamic of capitalism, and of internationalization of local struggles that rests on the construction of a political meaning (notably in the face of the great contemporary stakes) to these projects presented initially as exclusively economic and territorial. Finally, this process contributes to reconfiguring the practices and modalities of public decision-making, notably through the construction of new forms of public spaces and instances of debate, the reconnection of local decisions with international dynamics, and the redefinition of the notions of general interest and common goods.

Mensajito.mx and the irruption of new internet radio in Mexico

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This project is an investigation about the Mensajito device, which was created in Mexico City during 2018, whose functionality allows the broadcasting of internet radio without the use of computers. This device is the driving force behind a network of community radio stations in Mexico, with experiences in Oaxaca, Tlaxcala, Pachuca and Mexico City, with different projects on the air, among which ones Radio Nopal stands out, an independent radio community that broadcasts from Mexico City. Today with four years of experience (and more than 100 different programs), thanks to Mensajito. This research is attached to the Postgraduate Program of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), in the Master of Communication modality, with specialization in Communication and Technological Innovation lines, beginning in 2021. The project analyzes these practical examples as a manifestation of independent internet radio, circumscribed to the new media and technological innovation area. At the bibliographic level, the research contemplates a theoretical framework that starts from the concepts of Cultural Hegemony from Antonio Gramsci, Cultural Imperialism, proposed in the work of Armand Mattelart, and the idea of Cultural Industry of Theodor W. Adorno. This theoretical base converges in a critique of Marx and examines the relationship between the media and the State, in addition to analyzing the role of the State in guaranteeing pluralism and independence, now in a digital scenario. In addition, the review of Latin American authors in relation to the Political Economy of Communication (Pasquali, Bolaños, Zallo, et al), is a derivation that will allow offering a socio-political context to the development of these independent radio

manifestations, looking for a correspondence of the Community Radio concept, now online, in an onlife scenario. The main question of this research raises whether Internet communication is an alternative for Community Radio, and from there a specific question is broken down: Why is Mensajito a milestone for technological innovation in Mexico? The objective of these questions is to identify the opportunities of Community Radio on the Internet, both as a tool for technological and social innovation, in addition to establishing itself as a communication platform, oriented to the development of new media. The methodological design is based on a representation exercise from the people who are producers of programs in Radio Nopal, an organization conformed by radio amateurs, broadcasters who are not communication professionals. Then, an ethnographic exercise is proposed, based on a timeline that starts from the end of 2019 to 2022, so the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic (2020) participation can be distinguished. From there we can establish a framework that allows us to understand the context of independent radios and community broadcasting signals in Mexico, as well as a relationship towards the development of journalism and new independent media. In this last point, the theoretical correspondence will allow outlining an approach to the concept of Community Radio, now in the field of the internet, immersed in this migration of the Cultural Industry to an online scenario. Getting to know the Mensajito device will show us the reality of internet radio broadcasting in Mexico, and the impact that the Covid 19 pandemic meant for people, where this instrument allowed to create independent and live programming, beyond confinement. The result of this research brings us closer to the reality of new technologies in Latin America, and the opportunities of these manifestations on the Internet, under the wing of a more balanced scenario in favor of community media and independent signals.

Social media, influencer and the representation of the body: a reflection around the concept of hegemonic culture

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Visual social media, such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, offer spaces for the representation and performance of the body with specific affordances that were deeply studied mainly by different and fragmented sociological perspectives from self-presentation to feminist studies, just to mention few. Social media have been also conceptualized as platforms from critical (Van Dijck, Poell and De Waal, 2018) and neo-marxist point of view (for example the works of Fuchs) concentrating on the dynamics of algorithmic selection, commodification, digital labour, and cultural materialism. The aim of this paper is to propose a theoretical discussion that bridges the two research traditions around the concept of hegemonic culture (Gramsci, 1948-1951) that was little applied to social media. This can deepen our comprehension about the culture of social media and the contemporary social transformations. On the one side, actually, visual social media have consolidated modes and styles of body representation that follow precise standards and principles. These standards assessed so far that have been incorporated for examples in filters of augmented reality that conform the body to specific canons (i.e. make up, face traits, wrinkle erasing…). These canons have entered also in the modes of self-presentation of several users, among them also digital influencers, that conform to them. In this context, digital influencers can be interpreted as new bourgeoises that built their hegemonic culture also imposing a precise discipline to their bodies that is reinforced by the mechanisms of social acceptance, popularity, and visibility. The perfect, fit, well dressed body with curated make-up represents a sort of "code of conduct" (Ghigi and Sassatelli, 2018, p. 29) that transforms the body also in a mean of production (Abidin, 2016; Scolere, Pruchniewska and Duffy, 2018; Duffy, Poell and Nieborg, 2019). On the other side, on these platforms take place also alternative and critical representations of the body, such as exhibiting the so-called "imperfections" like wrinkles, grey/white hair, or stretch marks. Several accounts, also lead by digital influencers, carried on these paradigms with several goals, from asserting their own point of view about the representation of the body to position and brand themselves (Cwynar-Horta, 2016; Pedroni and Pofi, 2018). The commercial nature of social media

as platforms exploits these critical tendencies commodifying them in order to attract people and to maintain high the number of users, as the research about body positivity shows (Cohen et al., 2019). Instagram filters are another paradigmatic example under this point of view because they incorporate some standards and modify the body to which they are applied, but also because they can be used only in some specific occasions, dismissed, or changed according to the context, differently from medical lifting that is permanent. They can also be used in a critical way, for example simulating some skin diseases, such as vitiligo, to diffuse awareness about them. It appears, then, that social media can be conceptualized as theoretical-practical cultural frameworks that channel the visibility and invisibility of the bodies allowing both hegemonic and critical culture to consolidate. In this context, the relationship between hegemonic and critical culture can be conceptualized as a continuum rather than an opposition with the consequence that it is difficult to distinguish between them and the risk of subtle manipulation.

Communication inequality: history of a concept

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Our study focuses on the prevalence of conceptualizations of communicative inequality in the field of communication studies after the end of World War II. While communication studies have adopted and been influenced by conceptualization of inequality from related disciplines and fields, conceptualizations of communicative inequality seem to have played a marginal role. By means of a network analysis conducted on the corpus of more than 15,000 articles published in the eight most prominent international journals in the field between 1945 and 2018, the study aims to map the prominence and adoption of conceptualizations of communication inequality. We identify four distinct clusters of conceptualizations: modernization theory, cultural imperialism, knowledge gap and digital divide. Historically, approaches to communication inequality have been divided both along ideological lines - largely defined by support for (modernization theory) or opposition to (cultural imperialism) U.S. foreign policy - as well as different levels of communication inequality - while both modernization and cultural imperialism focus on international communication inequality, the knowledge gap tradition focuses in interpersonal differences. We argue that the dominant approaches and paradigmatic shifts in conceptualizations of communication inequality have largely been driven by forces outside of communication studies. Modernization, which dominated the period until the late 1970s, grew from U.S. interests in securing hegemony in the third world. As such it is symptomatic of the overwhelming influence of U.S. government interests on the early institutionalization of the field of communication studies in the wake of World War II. Cultural imperialism emerged during the 1970s as a direct challenge to modernization theory, connected to the global crisis of U.S. hegemony and to the articulation of third-world demands for establishing a New World Information and Communication Order. Concurrently, the knowledge gap tradition emerged in the U.S. in order to better understand the effectiveness of top-down communication campaigns, especially the mediating role of sociodemographic variables. While not so closely tied to government interests as modernization theory it does reflect administrative interests and the predominant conceptualization of communication within the administrative paradigm. Finally, the notion of a digital divide, which has become the predominant conceptualization of communication inequality since 2000, was originally connected to the concern of the U.S. Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration for providing "universal service" to U.S. citizens. As such it has been unable to establish itself as a neutral term designating communication inequality, as critical scholars remain vary of its lack of focus on systemic determinants of inequality like privatization and elite control of the means of mass communication.

The Media of Technopopulism: The Mainstream Right and the Far Right in Greece

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The victory of the conservative party New Democracy with an absolute majority in the 2019 Greek general elections was met with enthusiasm from the international political and financial media. The newly elected administration was depicted as technocratic with a natural aversion to populist politics, capable of putting an end to the political and cultural tensions between the EU core and periphery, fiscal consolidation and social welfare. The enthusiasm expressed by the international political and financial media and the way such an enthusiasm has been framed by the alleged virtues of liberalism, technocracy, moderation and capitalist acumen, paint a distorted picture of a conservative administration whose electoral victory and governing style depend on the ideological support of the far right. This paper analyses the international politics and financial media's depiction of the Greek conservative ruling party from 2019 up until 2021 by focusing on Foreign Policy, the Economist and the Financial Times. Conservative centrism and the free market have become increasingly unable to project a coherent vision of a good life to which all social groups and classes could subscribe. Consequently, conservative politics and its affiliate media found necessarily to distance themselves from old ideologies and identities, and to attempt to move to a new politics free from traditional principles. Technopopulism (Bickerton and Invernizzi Acceti, 2022) suggests that governance should be exercised by experts who have not been tainted by party and parliamentary politics and whose policymaking approach is independent from established ideologies. Effectively and as the international political and financial media argue, policymaking needs to be redefined as a problem-solving activity that bypasses social divisions associated with parliamentary democracy. As a newly found populism restores unity under the banner of nationalism and xenophobia, technocracy allows to take over and solve people's problems. The aim of this paper is twofold: First, the paper establishes the relationship between technocracy and populism, the mainstream right and far right through the depiction of Greek politics and of the ruling party New Democracy by the Economist, the Financial Times and Foreign Policy. Second, drawing on the work of Chamayou (2021) and Dardot and Laval (2019), the paper examines the international political and financial media's reconsideration of the acceptable limits of far-right politics and the ideological repositioning of the Greek mainstream right via the concepts of liberal authoritarianism and post-neoliberalism.

Absent leadership, ideologisation and the rise of new authoritarian politics

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This proposal stems from ongoing research on the transformations of leadership in radical political and social movements in the global North, over the past fifty years (Karatzogianni, Matthews, forthcoming). The work has looked into the existence of multifarious political and social mobilisations, which appear to oppose the existing order and propose radical alternatives, yet effectively both recognise established authority and, to a certain extent, actually reinforce some of the most predatory existing social powers. Based on analysis of graphic and textual archives, netnography and extensive interviews with contemporary activists, this research

seeks to introduce and allow discussion of two key questions. Firstly, by comparison with the internal and external modes of organisation within oppositional groups of the 1960s and 1970s, it considers the reliance of leadership in contemporary movements, upon digital communication technologies, platforms and networks. Indeed, although it can be argued that digitalisation has merely exacerbated several underlying contradictions, contemporary radical leadership construction is afforded (or intensified) by algorithm-based flows of information and viral affectivity. It is characterised by its highly volatile nature, both in terms of public mass-following and sudden passage from local, inter-individual level to worldwide mass exposure and following. The present day culture industry – in particular owners of the dominant digital platforms used by radical movements – effectively controls the tools and much of the 'raw' cultural resources that are used to mobilise broader audiences, extracting value from concomitant ideological production and exchange. We ask if one might objectively posit an industry–State–Movement bind, whose effective role is to replicate dominant relations of production. Secondly, many contemporary, principally Western-based oppositional movements, like Gilets Jaunes, BLM, XR, Youth for Climate (but also the recent Hong Kong protests, the Hirak and similar uprisings in Lebanon or Chilli) appear to take on a dual stance. On the one hand, they 'petition the king', thus acknowledging the legitimacy of existing power structures. On the other hand, they advocate a horizontal, often leaderless organisation. The French term mouvances has the advantage of conveying some degree of their amorphous and transient nature. Our research pays specific attention to the ideologisation process of movement activists, understood as a process of experimentation and expression of consciousness, proceeding from interactions with aforementioned political, social and economic determinants, yet granting the subject a degree of autonomy and adversity in her/his actions and material relations within the collective and on a wider social level. We ask how this process is related to the forms of leadership we observe and how these may be attuned to the shift towards a new authoritarian politics. In what respect might this contribute to an historical process of administration of populations, whether in the name of public health or averting climate catastrophe? Moreover, how does this contribute globally to an increasing segregation between the capitalist minority – flanked by its mercenaries and obliging encadrement class – and a global multitude of pauperised and constrained workers?

The WeChat social media platform from a foreign institution perspective: WeChat's role as a soft power tool

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WeChat is the major Chinese social media platform, counting nowadays over a billion users all around the world. It was born as a simple messaging and photo-sharing app in 2011, but its current functions are far more complex and various. The use of WeChat is key to deal with the People's Republic of China: foreigners working or living in China need to use this app daily. China has recently become an attractive destination for expatriates and inevitably WeChat goes beyond PRC boundaries. Indeed, as China widens its presence in the international scenario, WeChat spreads all around the world. However, being a foreign user in a Chinese platform might be a hard challenge to face. We hold that, opening an account in other existing social media platforms - such as Facebook or Twitter - does not require any governmental approval or government-specific procedures. To understand why the application process for a Chinese social media platform is harder, it is necessary to clarify the principle of Party-State. This principle in China means the overlapping of Chinese Communist Party and State institutions, that are rooted at each level in Chinese society. As Facebook and Twitter are not State instruments, WeChat is a tool that responds to Chinese law and that PRC government uses also to monitor

its users. Therefore, this paper focuses on how the Party-State strengthened its grip over society and asks whether WeChat can be considered a soft power tool. Specifically, it focuses on a foreign university landing on WeChat by analyzing the whole evolving process, from the subscription to the performance on the platform, taking Politecnico di Torino's Official WeChat account launched in January 2022 as a case study. The aim is to show how a foreign institution official account changes inside WeChat social media platform in relation with the Party-State influence.

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Networked Feminine Toil (NFT): social reproduction on the decentralised web

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In 2021, the NFT industry skyrocketed to a valuation of seventeen-billion U.S dollars. Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs), once the obscure preserve of fringe collectors, propelled Web 3.0 ideology into mainstream consciousness. The rise of Web 3.0 brings with it a wealth of mythologies and cultural lore. Digital technologies, built upon the blockchain ledger, are perceived to be delocalised and dematerialised, existing in an 'Other' world of digital space, resistant to corporeal, bodily difference. These myths work to obscure the complex patterns of digital labour that make the technology viable. By employing social reproduction, a Marxist Feminist theory pioneered by the Operaismo movement, we can start to uncover the forms of unpaid labour that are obscured by the mythos and the machinery of Web 3.0. By centring the figure of the NFT artist, we can begin to uncover the specific labour practices that contribute to Web 3.0's value production and economic yields, which are infamously high and unevenly distributed. Building on fifteen interviews with NFT artists, the primary research I undertook in early 2022, the aim of this presentation is twofold. First, I will explain my novel suggestion that social reproduction theory is essential to interpretating emerging technologies of Web 3.0, such as Non-Fungible Tokens. By building upon Tiziana Terranova's concept of Free Labour (2000), I will demonstrate how NFTs uphold an evolved system of capital, inextricable from the unpaid work of artists. This work extends beyond creativity alone to include unremunerated technical, social, and financial labour practices. Secondly, I will present evidence from interviews that demonstrate how the social experience of NFT production and labour is differentiated across gendered lines. I will argue that the technology of NFTs encodes marginalisation, and is in this way similar to other Web 3.0 technologies. What is at stake, then, is not only a new epoch of digital 'enclosures', as Ian Bogost has termed NFTs (2022), but an enclosure that specifically encapsulates and enervates specific types of bodies, within a new risk-oriented, techno-financial infrastructure (Federici, 2018). This presentation derives from ethnographic doctoral research into the material practices and experiences of the decentralised web.

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A Gramscian Analysis of the Reporting of Armed Irish Republican Groups 1998 - 2020

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1. Rationale Gramsci's theory of hegemony provides an instructive framework for analysing the under researched contribution made by media in securing consent for the current dispensation in Northern Ireland. Gramsci would have recognised the process by which a revolutionary movement is subsumed into the political establishment; he would also have recognised those dissidents that refuse to be hegemonised. While state domination of such entities is largely achieved through coercion, Gramsci tells us that civil society will also work to 'liquidate' them on the ideological level. The purpose of this study, then, is to interrogate media narratives that have built up around dissident republicans and situate these in the wider hegemonic landscape of contemporary Northern Ireland. 2. Research Questions 1. What framing narratives predominate in The Guardian newspaper when reporting armed republican activity between 1998 and 2020? 2. What might be the reasons for any change in framing? 3. Methodology A combined methodology that focused on selection and salience was developed. From a corpus of 100 articles in The Guardian, an initial sample of 20 was subjected to a thematic analysis before the entire corpus was examined using a framing analysis. This approach revealed how the granular aspects of texts build into larger bodies of meaning. 4. Initial Results Three distinct phases were found. From 1998 to 2006, the prowess of armed republicans is foregrounded in terms similar to those used when reporting on the Provisional IRA. From 2006 to 2016, more complex, contradictory framings develop: the armed campaign is futile, yet it disrupts the establishment; it is lethally dangerous, yet hopelessly amateurish; it has no support, yet it is constantly escalating. From 2016 to 2020, there is a move towards etiological and political considerations before a final return to episodic, condemnatory reporting. 5. Implications of results The first phase of study coincides with the climax of a long process whereby Sinn Féin/PIRA gradually embraced constitutional politics. At this crucial juncture, media amplification of dissident groups can only have emphasised the distance that Sinn Féin/PIRA had travelled. Following the 2005 ending of the PIRA campaign, Sinn Féin joined the establishment with an alacrity that surprised even its own supporters. Dissidents were now the only threat to the hegemonic consensus of the peace process: they needed to be delegitimised. The Guardian's reporting, employing a full repertoire of deprecatory framings, performs this role well. In the final stage of the study period, The Guardian's seemingly trenchant criticism of the Brexit vote is, in fact, safely confined within the consensus that supports the Belfast Agreement. Yet for every claim that hegemonic forces are shaping The Guardian's journalism, we also find more quotidian mechanisms at work. Between 1998 and 2006 journalists had to adjust to a new hegemony. The schemas of the PIRA conflict - involving a single fighting force, backed by a sophisticated political wing - disintegrated into a confused situation that resisted easy framing. After 2006, an even more fissiparous republican scene developed, presenting challenges for even the most forensic reporter. Finally, the momentous Brexit vote precipitated a revaluation of all aspects of political, economic, and cultural life - it would be surprising if it had not prompted a re-examination of Northern Ireland's history. Journalists engage daily in honest and serious work to deliver the 'news'. Yet the decisions, elisions and assumptions which comprise that work all take place within a bounded set of hegemonic values. Journalists inform and educate, then, but they also reproduce and reinforce hegemonic ideology.

The environmentalisation of control: Critical media studies and the ecological paradigm at the crossroad of biocentric biases

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The widespread distribution of media technologies signed the emergence of a possible stage led by an environmental operationality of power (Horl; Massumi). Sensorial algorithms and machine vision take advantage of the agential capacities of the 'environment', externalising the processes of data capture and modulation of intensities. In this paper, I argue that the expansion of such technologies of control does not end the longstanding dismissal of environmental agency, reinforcing instead – on an onto-epistemological level – the same governmental logic of power (Barad; Foucault). The presupposed biocentrism at the core of the contemporary cybernetic developments strengthens, in fact, the dominant power paradigm that rules over the heterogeneity of relational existence, ontogenetically addressing and piloting individual and collective individuation towards the maintenance and rule of the system that exercises control. Data intensive media technologies amplify and build upon an environmental heuristics that organises the emergence of life via its dialectical separation from the alterities that co-constitute it (Franklin; Hansen). If capitalism accumulates within nature (Moore), surveils and drives social behaviours (Zuboff), and data-colonise human life (Couldry and Mejias), critical media studies need to tackle on the general ecological paradigm by coping with the biocentric prejudice – precisely to shad light on the modes through which life is put to economic and political profit. Indeed, such environmentalisation also shapes the current understandings of media and capitalist capture. On the one hand, environmental media studies (or the understanding of media as environments) are capable of grasping the evident social and anthropocentric biases of the tradition of communication studies; on the other, they underpin the post-representational movement so relevant in contemporary media and cultural studies. But this possible critical effort seems to equally downplay the disruptiveness of certain process of mediation (which oppose the organisational stability of certain [media] systems), as well as reinforcing the vision of an autonomous, intelligent organism/system that is capable of organising its own outputs and its background via a relational openness to the environment.

The gendered access's mechanisms to the Italian Music Industry

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Music is not simply a language, an artistic expression; it is part of the wider world of the cultural industry. Reflecting on the gender gap in this particular context implies dealing with its dual role: on the one hand, it is responsible for the spreading and construction of cultural models, including the gendered ones; on the other hand, it presents an organizational context, regulated by specific principles typical of creative fields. These two souls of the music industry are closely interconnected and this is all the more true if we reflect on the causes and effects of the gender gap: the characteristics of the shared representations favor the survival of gender symbolisms which, perpetuating, influence the access logics of the women in industry. The UNESCO report (Conor, 2021) defined this labor sector as non-standard, as it is characterized by the strong presence of figures who work independently, by few structured realities and by a higher percentage of workers who combine music with other activities. The same report highlights how the gap between women and men in terms of attendance and salary is greater in cultural contexts than in other areas. Recent studies, which have attempted a worldwide overlook, have shown that female performers are only 22.5% of the world scene (Smith et al, 2020). If, on the other hand, we look at production and songwriting, the percentages undergo a

significant contraction: the authors are only 12.5% of the international scene and the producers 2.6%. The paper aims at showing a secondary reading of the main results of a qualitative study about the gender gap in the Italian music industry. Starting from the narrative interviews carried out with women (41) and men (11) that work in this specific area, the author proposes a synthetic model that highlights the main socio-cultural mechanisms that affect women's possibilities of access and presence in the industry. Results are analyzed according to two drivers: the mechanisms of inclusion, imagined as a continuum stuck between the exclusion, on one hand, and the exclusivity, on the other one; the socio-cultural value of the position, accessible or not, of the music industry, that could be positive or negative.

On the concept of value in the platform society

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The main goal is that of reviewing the most credited theories related to the so-called platform society, and namely such authors as Gillespie; Srnicerk; Zuboff; Lovink; Couldry; Van Dijck, Poell and de Waal; Bratton. In all cases, we will embrace critical internet theory as a framework, in order to detect some flaws of the platform category itself, mostly due to a lack of contextualization in the history of industrial and network society. What is more relevant, some inconsistencies will emerge, which deal with the economic background against which those theories are explicitly or implicitly defined, and with the incompatibility between the multi-sided market pattern and the critical theory assumptions. As it happens to arguments reaching the peak of expectations, platform theory must be thoroughly discussed. As it always happens in the hype cycle, again, the platformization concept is sometimes used to relabel traditional processes, with no significant increase in knowledge. The risk we are running is somehow that of reification of platform as a universal key-word, to repeat van Diik's critique of Castells' theory, pointing to his propension towards the reification of the network as a protagonist of human history. With the same category indiscriminately applying to Apple and WhatsApp, or to Facebook and Uber – which hardly have anything in common – the discourse about platformization eventually hit the same rocks. To a different extent, current hypotheses show a common underestimation of the role plaid by human labor. The goal of the talk is less to provide a systematic overview, than to apply a specific category – the above-cited value/labor dyad – to the framework of platform economy. For this purpose, we will put into question some common assumptions, by considering the growing reification of platform concept; the hiding of human labor beneath the image of a data-driven system; and finally, a tendency to the stylistic appropriation of Marxist concept, which are often quoted without being taken to their actual analytical consequences. There is also a more subtle consequence brought about by this insistence on platformization. Upon its common definition of multi-sided market, the notion of platform somehow stands in the middle between alternative theories, as it is equidistant between the extremes of critical and marketing-driven theories. By adopting a specific perspective, based on the concepts of value and production of value as elucidated in Marx's Capital, we will come across three main problems: the underrated role of human work; the over-estimation of data mining, with respect to labor exploitation; the irreconcilability of commodification concept and multi-sided model. One may argue that other interpretations of capitalism are possible, and actually they are: in the macro-text of platform society theory, though, these interpretations are never declared or explicitly put into action. On the very contrary, a wide use of Marxist formulas is made – such formulas as commodification, or capital - resulting in a sort of stylistic appropriation of main motives of critical theory.

Critical approach toward sociological studies of social media: the conflictual debate related to smart working during pandemic in Italy

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The recent pandemic has increased the time people spent in online environments interacting among each other and Social Network sites became one of the main places where debate arose around a multitude of public interest topics1. The idea behind this paper is to use Digital Methods2 and the power of social network platforms as megaphone of people's voice to analyze a macro debate in order to identify and analyze sub topics of interest and select persons of interest, with the aim to reach them for qualitative analysis. The question that reassume this idea is: How can digital methods and critical metrics be used to shape qualitative surveys and select subjects? Digital Methods are research strategies that thanks to the analysis of natively digital data available on web platforms, deal with re-proposing information in order to represent collective phenomena, social changes and cultural expressions. The theory in the field has moved towards critical metrics in contrast with the typical vanity metrics of Social Network sites. This critical metrics aims to the definition of relevant topics, dominant voices, vocality, commitment, positioning and alignment. An empirical approach has been used to initially explore a dataset of over 750'000 tweets regarding the macro topic of smart working on the Italian Twitter debate during the pandemic period, from March 2020 to November 2021. As first step we tried to map the evolution of the debate over time identifying 5 key-periods in which the debate particularly arose. Focusing on those periods we applied digital methods strategies on the main entities: users, hashtags and eventually hyperlinks. Users and Hyperlinks are the fundamental components that makes internet a network, and hashtags are the peculiarity of Twitter, the platform we focused on for this analysis. For each period we explored dominant voices analyzing the user networks based on mentions and we shaped topics performing co-hashtag analysis and looking at user-hashtags relations. Among all the sub-topics and communities identified we decided to focus on two specific entities which refer to potential situations of social fragility and difficulty: - A sub topic related to babysitter bonuses and parental leave that arose in the middle of March 2021, with the aim to explore the commitments regarding work life balance during pandemic; - A community identified in the second half of June 2020 around two profiles of career women, with the aim to highlight female voices. For these two topics a slightly different approach has been used: for the first one, starting from knowing the topic we identified dominant voices, while for the second one, knowing the users we focused on their Ego-Network to figure out the topics they are related to. Once having a plenty understanding of both topics and dominant voices for both clusters, is possible to use other critical metrics as positioning, alignment and commitment to go into details of the questions and select the users that could improve the quality of the surveys and return better insights. The implication of using this approach is to improve the synergic implementation of digital methods as an important instrument for social research with the expected result of approaching the topic with a better understanding of the online debate and improving the knowledge regard subjects and individuals in case of study, so being able to select subjects of interest with a clear criteria that allows researchers to assess many nuanced aspects of the argument of study.

Media Monopsony: three case studies and their implications

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Most of the emphasis on media concentration has focused on issues of ownership. However, the mechanisms of media control and concentration extend beyond who owns what and into who can purchase what. Particularly in the age of digital media, concentration of consumption has become increasingly apparent. Such concentration, termed monopsony, allows a small number of buyers to exert control over markets. While the primary examples of monopsony have been about labor, it seems likely that monopsony exists in media and via media in a range of other markets. Just as concentration of ownership resulted in a set of very particular problems – fewer voices, polarized channels of communication, and homogenized content among them – so, too, will concentration of consumption present power inequities that the political economy of communication needs to begin to address both in terms of its implication for the hyper-commodification of daily life but also for the ways in which it takes advantage of increasingly globalized markets that already had blunted labor mobility. Monopsony as a mechanisms allows for institutions to dominate a market in order to minimize and capitalize on areas of agency digital technologies are seen to afford. Always connected means always monitored. Always monitored can mean always commodified. This study asks the question what does monopsony look like in the global media environment. It contends monopsony is present in global media and that such concentration presents itself in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, labor. This wide-spread presence of monopsony is due to the development of a variety of digital technologies, particularly the combination of data gathering via mobile devices and social media, as well as the incorporation of those technologies into the value chains of media production. It draws on a variety of critical political economic case studies of media industries – including media labor, demand for microchips, and user generated data – in order to better understand and frame the implications of concentration of consumption on the study of media and communication industries. One clear implication is the way such concentration results in a blunting of the power and mobility of workers in global labor markets and a segmentation of work resulting in heavily gendered patterns of labor in particular sectors. Similarly, there would seem to be a likely hyper-commodification of daily life afforded by the range of ways data on users can be gathered and connected that extends beyond privacy concerns into areas of profitability and control.

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The 'Local and National' Discourse: A Tool to Demobilize the Turkish Model

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This article analyses the different functions of local and national discourse concerning state and business association relations in Turkey. It examines the de-mobilization of the "Turkish Model" and the historical bloc that emerged around AKP with local and national discourse, and studies how the relations between the state and business associations has been generating a discourse on "local and national" production in Turkey in the last 4 years. I argue that the "local and national" discourse is a product of an organic crisis of the Turkish Model, as a consequence of the crises in the global economy, the Turkish Model of development and historic bloc established around the AKP started to decline together with its hegemony. The state developed a strategic autonomy discourse as a tool for the demobilization of the Model and the alliance it created around the AKP. This research contributes to the existing literature on rising authoritarianism and identity debate in Turkey and how the regime was transformed while focusing on a discourse used as a tool. The article adopts Gramsci's conceptual framework, and analyses the conflicts between the two largest Turkish business associations (TUSIAD and MUSIAD) as a war of position. More importantly, the transition or the fall of the Turkish Model and rising authoritarianism should be understood as a passive revolution. AKP uses mobilize, demobilize strategy to the historical bloc emerged around the party, when it faces with an organic crises. AKP's strategy fits to the definition Gramsci's concept of passive revolution. I conducted a discourse analysis which allows us to understand the context of power relations between state and business associations. The research analyzes three aspects of the discourse; it first identifies the economic meaning of local and national production, then moves to the ideological and political meaning of the discourse, and lastly, it analyses the discourse used as a local and national identity. I contend that the "local and national" discourse is used for; political, ideological purposes and Islamic identity, which is a product of the organic relationship between the state and a business association, namely MÜSİAD, rather than the emergence of a new local and national economic model. Simultaneously, the "local and national" discourse is a product of an organic crisis of the Turkish Model, which also affected actors involved in the historical bloc, such as TÜSİAD. Their relations were affected together by the crises of the global economy, of the Turkish Model of development and of the historical bloc established around the AKP as its hegemony started to decline. Although the "Local and National" discourse has been dominating the Turkish political agenda for several years, it has had a minimal economic impact. Indeed, its incompatibility with the country's industrial capabilities precludes its becoming a serious national economic policy. Therefore, it has been criticized for its shortcomings. At a certain point, the term "production" was dropped from the "local and national production" discourse. It then became a purely political discourse and a matter of new national identity that could be used to separate economic actors along such lines as "us vs. them." This article argues that the "local and national" discourse is a product of state and business relations and is a valuable tool for understanding the ongoing passive revolution and conflicts within the bourgeoisie in Turkey.

The good life in a mediatized world: Social freedom as a foundation for privacy and agency

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As media and communication technologies (and their related social and material (infra) structures) permeate more and more domains and practices of today's world, media and communication scholars are increasingly called upon to address how these processes of mediatization (e.g., digitalization and datafication) enhance or diminish freedom and social justice. However, as social philosopher Axel Honneth (2014) has argued, Kantian and Lockean theories of justice dominate contemporary political philosophy (and thereby one of the theoretical reservoirs for also answering questions of media and 'the good life'). This paper therefore follows Honneth's proposal that we need a 'theory of justice as social analysis' – where the traditional division of labour between empirical disciplines and philosophical analysis is overcome – and argues that media and communication research can play a pivotal role in this regard due to the centrality of media-related issues in present societal debates as well as the already interdisciplinary composition of the field. In order to contribute to this endeavour, the paper draws on Honneth's conceptualization of three forms of freedom – negative, reflexive and social freedom – as an analytical lens to sketch out how different understandings of freedom lead to different normative interpretations, critiques and solutions to the predominant issues of the digital age. The paper uses the proposed UK online safety bill, which has been said to potentially set the tone for global social media regulation (Milmo, 2021), as well as examples of prevalent media and communication research themes as illustrative cases to outline two 'mediatization problematics' that underpin academic and political debates: the questions of privacy and agency. The paper argues that the framing of these problematics relates to negative and reflexive ideas of freedom, respectively. According to Honneth (2014), however, both of these forms of freedom are preceded and enabled by (a Hegelian idea of) social freedom, which Honneth describes as the mutual recognition that people potentially experience in intersubjective social practices and institutions such as families, friendships and intimate relationships, but also as consumers and laborers as well as citizens in public forums. Thus, the paper ends with a discussion of what social freedom might mean in relation to mediatization processes, drawing especially on philosopher Catriona Mackenzie's (2019) conceptualisation of relational autonomy, and media scholar Sofie Flensburg's (2020) outline of communication-political perspectives on the transformations of the communication system. Thereby, the paper provides a specific critical correction to the main emphases in existing media and technology regulation discourses, as well as a more general proposal for how media and communication research can have an impact on discussions of the good life in a mediatized world.

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Morbid symptoms – contemporary forms of fascism and the liberal tradition

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Do we find ourselves at the beginning of the "new world order" ("l'ordine nuovo") - a new historical epoch that changes the social, economic, political and ideological map of the world? War in Ukraine, the COVID-19 virus epidemic, and immigrant and ecological crises set up a new political stage. The paper addresses the rising forms of fascism in Eastern Europe's contemporary culture, especially elements of fare right politics, anti-migrant politics, the anti-vaccine movement, forms of urban fascism, the symbolism of military groups. It relates Gramsci's theory of the State to Ishay Landa's explication of the role of the liberal tradition in the history of fascism. Landa demonstrated how political liberalism incorporates non-democratic and aggressive capitalistic elements in moments of crisis and struggles to limit, control, or even eliminate democracy. Finally, the paper focuses on Antonio Gramsci's political thought on the nature of fascism through his theory of the State and understanding of the social conflict. When the ruling class loses consensus – the masses detach from their traditional ideologies. Gramsci's critique of the Italian political parties will show as visionary in understanding how political imbalances assisted in rising fascism and how bureaucracy transformed into the State. However, to interpret recent changes and a wide variety of phenomena – the paper will not only rely on traditional sociological and cultural epistemology. There is a specific "blind spot" when it comes to fascism and interpreting elements of fascism in contemporary culture. Today fascism has become an empty signifier to which the usual determinants do not apply. At the same time, rising nationalism, social insecurity, inhuman treatment of refugees are rarely recognized as fascism. Thus, Gramsci's theory of the State, his elaboration of class conflict need to be related to the (collective) unconsciousness. In doing so, the paper will rely on psychoanalysis, primarily Freud's theory of unconsciousness. Gramsci's thoughts on the crisis of authority - the ruling class losing broad social consensus - will be linked to the distortions present at the level of the manifest content of the (media) speech - as a result of secondary revisions that are taking place at the level of the (sub)conscious. Gramsci's famous sentence on the "morbid symptoms" appearing in historical interregnum when "the old is dying, and the new cannot be born" will be interpreted literally. Symptoms are psychoneurotic symptoms - the results of a specific psychical process in a particular moment in the genesis of neurosis. Symptoms are indicators of a return of the repressed thoughts as psychoanalyses elaborate on this phenomenon. Repressed that appears in the form of a symptom is a comprehensive metaphorical light motive used in Gramsci's work (we see similar reasoning in Friedrich Engels, E. P. Thomson...). Still, with Gramsci, such phenomena are explained as related to a rising political formation. The paper will illustrate this emergence of new political forms with elements of fascism as widely rooted in liberal political tradition. It will also show how political structures primarily arise with (collective) unconsciousness.

The Platform Model and the Emerging European Digital Cultural Sphere; towards a sustainable democratic public sphere

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In this paper I address the issue of platformisation as an opportunnity for the emerging European digital cultural sphere. At the moment, separate sectors deal with culture, media, and (tele)communication. While separately they create value for their respective stakeholders, in a platform-like interaction they could reach the ideal of generating public cultural wealth.

Theoretically, „they can together form an "ecosystem" of innovation that can greatly increase the value of their innovations as more users adopt the platform and its complements" (Gawer & Cusumano, 2015: 68). The platform is an American business model, driven by private actors in an environment that is quite adverse to state interventions. At the same time, in Europe, the relation between the population and public governance is quite decent, and this leaves the door open to envisaging a public platform for the digital cultural sector of the future. The main advantage of a platform is that it enables direct interactions between all parts involved on an equal footing (Hagiu, Wright, 2015). Moreover, the main social advantage is represented by the indirect network effects upon all parts and customers involved (Boudreau & Hagiu, 2011). On this vain, we can consider the European citizens as potential beneficiaries of this network effect. The affiliation of all parts involved is acknowledged. The opportunity for European Union policy making is one of convergence of cultural, media, and communications policy towards a digital cultural politics (Valtysson, 2020). In this paper I argue that the European Union governance bodies can become a "MPS – a 'multi-sided' platform that enables interactions between multiple groups of surrounding consumers and 'complementors'" (in Boudreau & Hagiu, 2009:163). Moreover, it could be the first public MPS to govern a digital cultural sector. The main focus of this paper is thus the analysis of the structure, practices and governance of the thriving corporate platform world in order learn from it. How do MSP - `multi-sided` platforms govern the multi-sided production? How does a corporate platform manage the multiple externalities? How do they coordinate all the activities and operations? How do they manage the information imbalances? All these are challenges similar with the tasks the European governance bodies are embarking upon when it comes to digital cultural politics and platformisation. I argue that the ideal of the commons could emerge from this unexpected direction if only taking the model from the corporate world and redesign it on democratic, public foundations.

Keywords: digital cultural politics, public governance, MPS – multi-sided platform, European Union, public cultural wealth

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How digital technologies fuel the promises of platform cooperativism

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With this contribution, my goal is to explore how digital technologies play a role within the promises of platform cooperativism. Many platform cooperatives were born in response to the unfair practices and negative externalities of platform capitalism, proposing alternative business models that integrated cooperative principles – such as democratic governance, caring for communities, and putting people before profit – into the digital economy. Like in platform capitalism, digital technologies play a crucial role in platform cooperatives, albeit a significantly different one. As they try to reappropriate the opportunities and values associated with digital technologies, what challenges do platform cooperatives face? I start from the role digital technologies played in the rhetoric of the "sharing economy". In the late 2000s, sharing economy companies maintained that ubiquitous connection would enable new opportunities of sociality through disintermediated exchange, which would increase utility for users while

also disrupting business models that had proven unfit for the digital age. A decade later, as few companies achieved dominant market positions and their profit-driven business models were gradually revealed, it became clear how the "sharing economy" was less about bringing the digital revolution to life, and more about integrating more traditional tactics – like locking customers into proprietary solutions and raising barriers to entry for competitors – with the new opportunities offered by ubiquitous connectivity – such as monetizing personal information, or marketing precarious jobs as flexible opportunities for extra income. In contrast to this, what roles do digital technologies play in platform cooperativism? What challenges need to be resolved for these roles to be fulfilled? What dilemmas and contradiction characterize these challenges? My work is based a hands-on ethnographic experience that I conducted within Fairbnb.coop, a platform cooperative that created an on-line marketplace for short-term rentals. Fairbnb.coop operates in a sector where dominant platforms have not only failed to deliver on their rhetorical promises, but also generated negative externalities on territories and their socio-economic fabrics – including the distortion of the housing market, the loss of territorial identity, and the precarization of work. As a response, Fairbnb.coop offers an alternative vision for tourism based on three pillars: cooperative governance, community-powered decentralization, and a fair tourism model that incorporates both legality and sustainability principles. Through my engaged positionality and insider's perspective, my goal is to share partial reflections about the reality of running a platform cooperative. In turn, I hope this can contribute to wider debates about both the cooperativism movement and the viability of alternatives business ventures within a socio-economic system dominated by capitalist logics.

Social Movements and Media Representation: "Media of Conflict" or what comes after the "Networked Social Movements"?

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The Networked Social Movements (Castells 2015) were at the heart of the protest cycle of 2011 which started with the uprising in Tunisia. There, it eventually led to a new constitution being passed in which also information and communication rights were granted. In most of the countries (about 60 in that year with other similar movements as the Gezi Park protests and the Maidan to follow during the next two years). Many of these protests and social movements have been repressed violently. Countries as Syria, Libya and Yemen have sunken into war. What was part of a global protest cycle which might as well be dated back to the World Social Forum Process and the „first informational guerilla movement" (Castells 1997) in 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico, could be perceived as a social movement approach relying on communication (Della Porta 2011) – to win the hearts and the minds of people instead of seizing power (Holloway 2002). Now, with the current overthrow of emancipatory movements all over the world (not to forget India, once a stronghold of the World Social Forum with its Alliance of Peoples Movements) and the initiation and growth of the far right, different questions arise: „What role do communication and media play today – after the loopholes of the Arab Spring have been closed? What is happening to the (transnational) public sphere(s) with the establishment of the digital media global players which have outgrown the power of the so called media moguls of analogue media? Do we see an evolution from „alternative" (emancipatory) media to „media of conflict"? Why is the influence of far right media and conspiracy theories on the internet so great compared to critical, anticapitalist, feminist, queer and antiracist initiatives? These questions should be adressed leaning on the theory of Antonio Gramsci, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The research questions will be tackled in a study on the World Media Forum inside the World Social Forum Process and the (media) initiatives in and around it. The first interviews are scheduled for the World Social Forum in Mexico taking place in May 2022 leading up to a network research project with the involvement of different universities in Germany, Tunisia and South America. The first conclusions of the prestudies could be presented at the conference in September.

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"Hunting migrants" – the discursive construction of migrants in the Croatian media

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The paper focuses on discourses and representations of migrants in the media. It is extended upon a theme analysis of dominant news portals in Croatia, conducted by using a data base of 3044 articles in a two-year period (2018-2019). The media articles included in the data base were identified according to key concepts: migrants/refugees/asylum seekers. They mainly referred to migrations that occurred as a result of the war in Syria but also included migrations from other Middle Eastern countries. The theme analysis showed that migrants were primarily linked to the theme security: security of borders, territory and people. In addition, the representation of "migrants" considerably differed from the ways "refuges" were discursively constructed: while "refugees" were depicted as victims in need, "migrants" were demonized and continuously depicted as perpetrators, invading the state territory, creating "problems" for the repressive institutions but also the local people. In this paper we use discourse analysis and focus on the representation of migrants as a specific category. We situate these representations within the broader frame of racist ideologies "curved out" in the media as a place where ideas and ideologies about race are articulated, transformed and elaborated (Hall, 2003) We aim to identify the language used in the discursive constructions of migrants as a threat, directing our attention to ways in which language was used to create distinctions between "us" and "them". In the analysis, we particularly focus on Stuart Halls (2003) concepts of "overt racism" in which open coverage is given to positions that are openly racist, and "inferential racism" by which representations are naturalised and appears as a set of unquestioned assumptions. The results of the analysis are situated in a broader theoretical perspective following Etienne Balibar (1991) and the ways in which neo-racism as an ideological formation is expressed. Ways of mapping neo-racism includes the use of cultural differences as substituted to biological ones, in which groups are not viewed as superior/inferior but as incompatible in terms of traditions and ways of life. The preliminary findings suggest that both cultural and biological racism are identifiable in the media representations, and we will outline the discursive practices involved. While cultural racism is identified through the claim that they are "just culturally different", biological racism is identified in the way in which, in order to discursively create hierarchies of superiority and inferiority, migrants are dehumanized, by using analogies to the animal world and transforming them to "hunting material".

New Nationalism as a Response to Fearing the New Emancipatory Totality: Black Lives Matter and Decolonize This Place on the Czech Internet

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This conference paper aims to explore the rising nationalistic political rhetoric as well as action occurring within the digital realm in the Central European region, specifically in the Czech Republic. In this regard, it builds upon the concept of the illiberal turn through which the recent process of democracy backsliding has been examined (Makarychev 2019; Surowiecz & Štětka 2020) in this region consisting of four countries of the Visegrad group (Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary). Based on this umbrella concept, several illiberal tendencies can be observed, especially the shift towards authoritarian political practices, the growth of populism, and the rise of new nationalistic tendencies. The proposed paper focuses on the third process that takes a specific form in the digital environment and has a unique relationship to the social movements of Black Lives Matter and Decolonize This Place. On the general level, the paper is asking: (1) In which form(s) do the new nationalism and the BLM and DTP movements co-exist within one communication discourse? (2) Which specific formation(s) does the nationalistically driven communication take (e.g., racism, homophobia, terrorism)? (3) Which other discourses does the new nationalistic online discourse activate, how and why (e.g., migration crisis, totalitarian past)? As both these movements are understood as the digitally born movements (Liebermann 2020), they have proved to have a unique global and flexible character through which they operate in various geopolitical realms. Therefore, it is no surprise that they have also spread and made an impact in the Central European post-soviet countries in which the societal problems of decolonization, Afro- American human rights, or systemic racism have only a little tradition as leading topics of public debate. However, as the proposed paper suggests, these movements have mobilized different political discourses and topics specific for the local environment (Zarkov 2021). In case of Czechia, the BLM and DTP movements serve as triggers for recalling the recent so-called "migration crisis" (2015-2019); the socio-political process that was heavily framed through an antiimmigrant discourse in the whole region. In this regard, biological and securitization figures and icons meet to produce a nationalistic version of the digital racism (Siapera 2019) through which the toxic, racist, xenophobic, and homophobic content circulates while being labeled the patriotist one. Moreover, both movements also serve as platforms referring to the historical discourse of totalitarian past. In online debates and posts, the regimes of communism and Nazism are equaled and the influx of "imported, foreign" thoughts and bodies (represented by the BLM and DTP) is seen as inevitably leading towards the establishment of new totality. Therefore, the permutation of two theoretical concepts of postcolonialism and post-socialism can be observed and analyzed here (Gagyi 2015; Tlostanova 2012, 2018). The most visible components of reparative history (Hall 2018), the statue war and the renaming of public spaces, also take place. It is emotionally debated if and which statues from the past should be removed and which streets and squares renamed (Bergin & Rupprecht 2018). The paper examines both formations of the new digital nationalism- the racist noise as well as the references to the totalitarian past - within the realm of the Czech Facebook and online public forums. It demonstrates how these formations have been constituted and reflects on how they collapse into each other. To convey these findings, it employs the visual, textual and discourse analyses.

From fictional images of postcapitalism to the restoration of the sociological imagination about systemic transformation: Finding lines of flight in science fiction and making use of their heuristic potential

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Where is it possible to find images of a postcapitalist socio-economic system already in operation? What might such types of worlds look like when they would have gone beyond capitalism or emerged from it by finding emancipatory paths? How to give substance to such a thought experiment? If it is a question of finding potentially convincing examples, perhaps they are already available in science fiction. By initiating and accumulating thought experiments, science fiction offers a reflective medium and a cognitive reservoir. One of its notable advantages is that it immerses you in systemic transformations that have already taken place, since the worlds described are supposed to be the result of previous trajectories. This contribution proposes to take advantage of this by considering that imaginary activity, through such explorations, can also offer heuristic resources. The question is not "Does Capitalism Have a Future?" (Wallerstein et al., 2014) or "How Will Capitalism End?" (Streeck, 2016), but rather: what can there be after or beyond capitalism? First, we will explain how this type of fiction makes it possible to propose a reopening of the possible modes of apprehension of imaginable futures, precisely by considering the science fiction narrative as a vector of projective exploration of the future. We will thus highlight how science fiction makes it possible to test forms of collective reconfiguration and to offer a set of epistemological gains. We will then exploit a corpus of mainly literary works to show how science fiction can be an original vector for the production and exploration of socio-economic possibilities, original forms of collective organization or new ways of living for example. What will interest us is not only to underline the critical dimension of these speculative or future-oriented fictions, but also to evaluate to what extent this imaginary space and this worldbuilding activity can be favorable to the production of alternative (and desirable) futures and constitute a particular type of prefiguration. While defending the idea that it is better to take science fiction productions as lines of flight (in the sense of Gilles Deleuze), we will finally aim at identifying and classifying science fiction that searches for new or different directions in a variety of postcapitalist possibilities outside the currently dominant model. Engaging with science fiction could then finally appear as the best way to take the prefix "post-" seriously.

Micropolitics of Techno-Social Routines: A New Materialist Socio-Semiotic Framework for the Social Relationality to Come

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This study proposes a new materialist socio-semiotic framework to spell out how techno-social routines (human/machine interaction) redraw the social relationality to come and ways of signifying it. Thinking with Guattari's semio-pragmatic project (i.e., micropolitics) and New Materialist critical social theory, it is argued that the techno-social routines deploy an onto-epistemic displacement as far as new technological artifacts - designed to be interactive, customizable, and sympathetic – proliferate in ordinary life entangling technoscience with social practices. By conceptualizing techno-social routine as an onto-epistemic displacement, the study illustrates (1) How the material response translates routines into a set of actions induced by technoscientific arrays in the context of daily activities; (2) The onto-epistemic

paradigms upon which material-discursive practices re-signify the content and expression of routine. The study advocates a critical and theoretical approach to dig into the problematic constitution of the Self and the Social that is the matter of the social relationality to come. In this perspective, a New Materialist socio-semiotic framework contends that human/machine interaction has to do with technoscientific signs rather than the socio-cultural codes. On the one hand, this focus on the system of signs is central to recognize how techno-social routines diffract social fabric's endogenous norms and turn towards a relational dynamic based on signs of action and perception of proper technoscientific discourse. On the other hand, the socio-semiotic engagement enables to unveils that interaction with new technological artifacts displays micropolitics highly embedded with performative power relations. First, the study elaborates on the notion of 'subjectless action' (Guattari 1988) to discuss techno-social routines as the condition of enactment. It points out the nexus that sets off Human/Machine interaction by the spark of intimate performative capacities. Next, the study spells out the semiotic shift that reconfigures human/machine interaction as a micro-political assemblage, arguing for performative power relations set up by signs of action and perception. The case study of the Domotics device Alexa is adopted to disclose the soundless mood of techno-social routines in-between experimentation and experience within the private sphere. The last part of the talk draws up techno-social routines as the strategic practice through which the onto-epistemic displacement dis-re-articulates the social field. Crosscutting the techno-social routines from a condition of enactment, micropolitical assemblage, to strategic practice opens the Human/Machine interaction to the growing complexity fastened technoscientific discourse and precarious patterns of affect, performativity, and perception.

The Entrepreneurial Labor, The Transactional labor and The Physical labor. A Study of E-Commerce Sellers in rural China under the Platform Economy

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The emergence of entrepreneur labor on platforms is a manifestation of the global expansion of neoliberalism since the 1970s. Some entrepreneurs, like sellers on TikTok living in remote and poor villages in rural China, promote the datafication and commodification of platforms. What kind of entrepreneurial labor e-commerce sellers perform in rural China? Does platformization allow them to gain new subjectivities? My approach is based on "platformization", which means the penetration of infrastructures, economic process and governance frameworks of digital platforms in different economic sectors and spheres of life. I spent eight months in a rural village, located in North China, working for two entrepreneurial teams. We can reach two main conclusions from the ethnography. First, on the one hand, the government exerted an invisible but powerful influence by taking urban-rural divide measure from 1949, resulting in abundant surplus labor from rural areas. Therefore the rural residents are easily mobilized to engage in entrepreneurial labor. On the other hand, the competition among different platforms provides opportunities for rural entrepreneurs to join the platformization. The platform Pinduoduo invested much into rural e-commerce, making itself become a competitor to Taobao focus urban sellers in five years. The entrepreneurs in rural areas got various support, like delivery package discounts, from platform. Second, In contrast, the government and platform claim that entrepreneurship means modernized and informalized labor, there are three kinds of labor, according to my observation, for rural e-commerce sellers. 1 The Entrepreneurial Labor: depoliticization This term emphasizes that sellers need to self-teach the platform's rules for acquiring wealth and take all the risks on their own. It shows that "entrepreneurial labor" is a depoliticization of entrepreneurship. To get orders, the entrepreneur has to attract users, which is defined as "traffic" (流量), towards their online shop. The first way is to pay for the traffic, paying platform to buy viewers with specific demographic characteristics, known as "traffic investment" (投流). This can be done on sellers' own or through an agency. Sellers

can also ask celebrities to endorse their products on Douyin and share the profit with them. The other way for entrepreneurial is to count on themselves, like increasing their own labor time and enriching their labor skills, figuring out the algorithmic mechanism. The neoliberal narrative about "entrepreneurial" transfers responsibility of unemployment from institutions to individuals, illustrating the contemporary form of cultural hegemony. 2 The transactional labor: commoditization "Transactional labor" means sellers need to discover and modify products to meet the platform's standard, helping the platform achieve a larger scale of commodification. The sellers collect many garlic from farmers, just circulated in the local area as domestic food before, and sell them as special local products on a modern package. The sellers also urge the manufactories to produce small packages of goods to save delivery costs. Moreover, they believe young urban users will welcome it. Their decision is made based the data provided by platform. Though sells get the data about users and their own selling activity for free, they have offered platform more commodities, data and changed the supply chain according to platform logic. Besides, they need to pay extra money to platform, for more specific information about the users. Finally, the entrepreneurs promote the commoditization of local areas and the platformization of existing manufactories. 3 The Physical labor: datafication This term refers to uploading data about the goods, creating links online and delivering physical products based on data, which can be described as datafication. In terms of the actual operation process, when the agricultural products are standardized, entrepreneurs are asked to provide pictures, videos, and text introductions for the products according to the platform requirements. As for the platform, they only need to collect and process the data about the commodities. Therefore, when the merchant accidentally marks the wrong data, some consumers maliciously make orders frantically, resulting in the merchants closing the store to pay the deposit. In this process, digitization has become the highest authority, forming a hegemonic ideology, which means, although people know that some of the data is incorrect, the system itself has already begun to operate, so it can only be handled according to the rules. This has already involved another component of datafication. The commodities need to be transformed from data into objects. When entrepreneurs sell out products, they have to face another challenge: converting these data into objects, which is usually the most time-consuming part of the everyday process of doing e-commerce. I define this process as " the double movement of data and objects". The process of making links is actually "the datafication of objects", while the process of converting orders into packages is "objectification of data". Based on the labor process, especially physical labor, sellers still think they are farmers. However, sellers act as a gateway, connecting the platform with the infrastructure in a rural area during the platformization process. Thus, the platform embeds the existing tradition (here, urban-rural divide) rather than subverting it. As a result, platformization reproduce, rather than subvert, subjectivities of e-commerce sellers.

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Symbolic violence and elite publics: The social stratification of the public sphere in the datafied era

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Many researchers increasingly perceive the public sphere to be in terrible shape due to the opaque logics of algorithms that secretly structure the online public space (Gillespie 2014) in the bleak service of surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2015), rendering the citizens passive, feeble or belligerent. Echoing the main inquiry of earlier audience researchers like Lai Katz, Stuart Hall and David Morley, to name a substantial few, scrutiny of what datafication does to citizens needs to be complemented with empirical research on what citizens actually do with media within datafied publics and how this links to the asymmetrical power relations and symbolic dominance (or, as Gramsci would put it, cultural hegemony) of society, as previous pre-internet research indicate that dimensions of social inequality play a significant role for the level of public orientation and engagement of citizens (Couldry et al. 2010, Hovden & Moe 2017). Using multiple correspondence analysis, or MCA, (Le Roux 2004) on a representative survey sample of Danish citizens (N = 5660), this study thus aims to scrutinize how people's varying mediated public connections (Couldry et al. 2010) are linked to broader sets of mediated and non-mediated public lifestyles (Hovden 2019), viewing respondents as inherently situated in a stratified social world in which both digital, legacy mediated and physical life intertwiningly unfolds, and thus scrutinizing how this interplay frame the engagement and connectedness of citizens in the public sphere. While critical data studies research is right to problematize the democratic challenge of datafication, our study shows that the problems of the public sphere are more tied to sociocultural class than to what type of media people use to connect and engage. Thus, the Danish public sphere is seemingly divided between, roughly put, two types of public lifestyles; a political and an apolitical and passive citizenry, closely connected to patterns of social stratification in which the dominating strata embody the ideal of appropriate citizenship and the dominated don't. Upon further scrutiny, however, the supposedly apolitical do have various political positionings (the best example being fully distrusting state media, in the questionnaire exemplified by the Danish Health Authority in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic). In order to solve this conundrum, we propose the Bordieuan the notion of symbolic violence, which stipulates how the most powerful and affluent strata have the right to "impose the legitimate knowledge and of the sense of the social world, its present meaning and the direction in which it is going and should go" (Bourdieu 2000: 185). We thus interpret our results as portraying how symbolic boundaries between the elite and the mundane publics are continuously upheld, in which the capital and habitus of citizens seem to structure the affinity or resentment towards the dominant perception of politics. Symbolically valid representations of politics flourish in the world of hard news and printed newspapers, engaging with serious topics like climate change, national economy and party politics, which clearly appeal more to the taste of the affluent, while seemingly low interest in politics, media entertainment and deep mistrust in the system is reserved for the bottom of society, who, expressing an overall political alienation and distancing to the core institutions of society, tend to "refuse what they are refused" (Bourdieu 1984). We believe that these findings empirically document traces of social fragmentation and anti-establishment attitudes, which raises critical questions about what role the dominant strata, including the media, has in structuring "the classes of the public".

The emergence of the non-aligned news agency pool (NANAP)

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The non-aligned news agencies pool (NANAP) was the flagship project of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) initiative. It represented an attempt at strengthening "self-reliance" of non-aligned countries in the field of information and decreasing their dependence on western information sources. However, almost nothing is known about the process that led to the launch of the pool in january 1975 and its institutionalization in the following year. In order to shed light on this process, I focus on three groups of factors: 1.) internal, originating from within Yugoslavia as the driving force of NANAP; 2.) external, originating from changes in international relations; and 3.) factors rooted in the institutional history of NAM. Within Yugoslavia, Tanjug's interests coincided with the interests of the Yugoslav state, as its expansion into the non-aligned world was viewed favorably and supported by the Yugoslav state, especially the State secretariat for foreign affairs. Tanjug's information infrastructure was seen as a way to promote Yugoslavia's viewpoints to the world as well as a way to facilitate information exchange between state institutions. Especially after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 the Yugoslav leadership, fearful of Soviet aggression, was showing a renewed interest in the non-aligned world. The key influences in the realm of international relations were the same that drove the institutionalization of NAM during the 1970s and increased cooperation between non-aligned countries. The first is the easing of tensions between the U.S. and USSR and the beginning of the SALT talks, raising fears in the third world that renewed dialogue between the east and the west would greatly reduce the influence of third world countries in international relations. The second group of factors is connected to persisting global inequalities and the increasing frustration of third world countries with north-south dialogue. As the Bretton- Woods order crumbled, many NAM countries showed interest in building "self-sufficiency" as a way of strengthening their position vis-a-vis rich capitalist countries of the global north. These factors led to the rebirth of NAM after it had already been declared dead, and a clear focus of the movement on north-south disparities, which strongly informed the reasoning behind NANAP as well as the way it was institutionalized within NAM. The third group of factors is rooted in institutional history. Even though NANAP was an extension of Tanjug's bilateral relations with non-aligned agencies, the pool had to be adapted to the established forms of economic cooperation within NAM. Pre-existing forms of economic cooperation therefore provided a blueprint for the institutionalization of NANAP and informational cooperation more generally. The prevailing institutional ethos of NAM, reflecting strong opposition to centralization, shaped the formation of NANAP as a decentralized, multilateral project. Even though Yugoslavia was clearly the leading force, it had to disguise and downplay the degree of its involvement and was investing considerable effort in attracting active cooperation from other NAM countries (particularly Tunisia and India) and presenting NANAP as a multilateral project with a broad basis of support from the very beginning, even though that was certainly not the case.

Mapping gender inequality related to employment in the media sector in Romania (2008-2019)

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Gender inequality related to employment represents a contemporary issue, that affects women in various economic sectors and have consequences related to women's access to resources and status (Daly, 2020; England, 2010). In media sector, recent reports underline

that, despite emancipatory social policies and other empowering measures, women are still underrepresented as employees, and negatively discriminated against men in terms of wages, access to senior positions, job opportunities, and family-work balance (Council of Europe, 2019; EU, 2018; UNESCO, 2014). In Romania, the gender equality across media sector is still challenged by differences in access to employment and in what regards the monthly wages. On the other hand, research dedicated to gender equality in media mainly used qualitative methods. So, my paper will address the topic of gender employment inequality in media sector using a quantitative approach, based on national statistics. The paper will try to answer the following question: How does gender inequality reflects in data regarding the employment and pay in media sector from Romania, between 2008 and 2019? Romania as case study had the advantage of having a history of equal access to jobs for men and women, guaranteed by law and encouraged by the social organization of the country (a legacy of the former communist system in which women were supposed to have regular, full time employment). In what regards the media sector, the qualitative researches made until now did not clarify if media is feminized sector (with women outnumbering men as employees, and with lower wages to all employees) and did not offer clear data on the level of gender pay gap in media organizations. I also note that the national gender pay gap is the smallest in Europe: second after Luxemburg in 2019 - 3,3. Romania is also a country in which inequality is prevalent at the level of income, employment and education, one of the most unequal in EU (Precupetu, 2013). I observe that there are many paradoxes in what regards the gender aspects in media sector which should be investigated more closely. The data suggest that media sector as a whole is not a feminised one. The average earnings in media sector are 50% higher than the average of earnings in the national economy. I argue that the sector might not lose its social prestige, at the level anticipated by other studies (Avadani, 2017). On the average, men outnumber women as employees in the media sector. However, the data suggest that there are parts of the media sector where women outnumber men and earn more than men. The audio-visual sector which includes television and radio channels display a certain balance between men and women in terms of access and pay. These findings are congruent with previous studies in Romania (Apostol, 2018) and Poland (Grober, 2020), but the presence of women in television is attributed to raising importance of the physical appearance in this area of work. On the other hand, men usually occupy technical positions in audio-visual industry, that are paid less than the content production positions (journalists, editors, anchors). Another interesting finding is the clear gap between men and women in the publishing sector. The publishing sector includes the legacy media (newspapers) that has been presented as "male" domain. "Hard" journalism is still dominated by men, while women tend to occupy "soft" journalism positions (Padovani, Ross, and Gallagher, 2017).

Is there a future for Marxist media studies? Old debates, recent research and new challenges for Marxism as a social science

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The intervention is divided into two parts, followed by a conclusion. (1) First, I address the issue of the place of media studies within Marxism as a social science. In this regard, I raise two problems. (1.1.) First, I ask how the media should be conceptualized within a Marxist theory of capitalist society. I advocate the relevance of a new "structuralist" Marxist approach, that is, one that recognizes the weight of social structures and carefully analyzes their composition. I briefly revisit some aspects of the debate around Marxist structuralism in the 1970s and the ISA thesis (Althusser, Poulantzas/Miliband, Therborn), and I make the case for firmly inscribing the study of the media within such a theoretical framework. I also analyze some results emerging from the literature on the recent phenomenon of Podemos in Spain, and argue that its trajectory is an important case study to demonstrate the continuing relevance of structuralist Marxism for the understanding of ideology and the media. (1.2.) The second

problem concerns the relationship between media studies and Marxist class analysis. I review some important theses developed in the 1970s both in academic Marxist debates about the middle class (Poulantzas, Carchedi, Wright) and in militant Marxist magazines (e.g. Potere operaio) and social movements in Italy. This leads to an important, though controversial, thesis: that most media workers cannot be included in the working class but are part of the middle class. (2) Second, I briefly summarize and attempt to critically evaluate the work of two authors who have recently conducted research from a different Marxist perspective on the relationship between (mostly digital) media and contemporary societies. (2.1.) Christian Fuchs is probably one of the Marxist scholars who has most organically reflected in recent years on the media from a Marxist perspective. I identify the main relevance of his work in his attempt to structurally connect different traditions of Western Marxism with each other and with other traditions of critical media studies. Moreover, he has been involved in linking issues often belonging to different disciplinary fields (media studies, sociology of work, social theory) within the same Marxist horizon, and has contributed to update the reading of Marx with respect to the new issues of digital capitalism. (2.2.) Although neglected by academia, Renato Curcio's recent works on digital capitalism have shown the possibility of innovating and re-actualizing the classical Marxist approach in a highly original way. Under the background of a Marxist analysis of capitalism, he critically engaged in dialogue with a wide variety of sources, especially with the heterodox tradition of studies on dissociation (Janet, Hilgard, Lifton and especially Lapassade), in order to elaborate a powerful and ongoing analysis of the effects of digital media on individual and collective identity structures. Far from being merely speculative, this research also draws on a range of original (published and unpublished) research concerning the use of digital media in workplaces, that was carried out by employing an original social research technique, "narrative socioanalysis". A quick critical assessment concludes the intervention. I argue that, in spite of the advances of recent years, the Marxist literature on media still suffers from two major weaknesses. First, it lacks a shared theoretical framework, especially with respect to the place of media in Marxist theory. My paper seeks to offer a contribution to this discussion. Second, there is a lack of adequate empirical studies to support the literature's challenging theoretical theses.

Between market and social justice – A critical discourse analysis of hegemonic struggles in the representation of the super-rich in Swedish legacy newspapers

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One of the major developments following the shift from Keynesianism to neoliberal forms of capitalism has been rising levels of wealth concentration towards the richest apex of the capitalist class, often referred to as the super-rich. While capitalist societies are inherently dependent on the existence of unequal social relations, this paper advances the argument that the rise of the super- rich provides a challenge to the legitimation of neoliberal capitalism – not least the system's ability to cater to prevailing ideals of social justice and democracy. As such, in a Gramscian terminology, the super-rich can be approached as a phenomenon that neoliberal capitalism must discursively incorporate into its hegemonic justice narratives if the social order is to steer clear of a legitimation crisis. In an effort to remedy the lack of research into the super-rich within critical media studies, this paper studies discursive representations of billionaires in Swedish legacy newspapers as potential sites of hegemonic struggle between contradicting ideals of justice. Theoretically, the paper embarks from Nancy Fraser's grand theory of capitalism as an institutionalized social order consisting of multiple normativities each associated with one of capitalism's separated yet interrelated spheres, e.g. ideals of 'market justice' within the economic sphere and ideals of 'social justice' within the political sphere. Drawing on Fraser's concept of normative contradictions, which describes the emergence of crises when these ideals conflict head-on, the paper argues that the

naturalization of neoliberal capitalism necessitates an ideological evaluation of the super-rich according to ideals of market justice, or alternatively, 'marketized' ideals of social justice. By fusing Fraser's theory with a Gramscian critical political economy- perspective stressing the contradicting nature of media commodities (as advanced in the works by Des Freedman), the paper explores the following research question: How do the discursive representations of the super-rich serve to mitigate/intensify normative contradictions between market justice and social justice? In order to investigate this question, the paper performs a critical discourse analysis drawing on van Leeuwen's approach for studying discursive transformations in the representation of social actors and social actions. The data consists of 31 feature articles centering on domestic billionaires published in four Swedish legacy newspapers between 2018–19. Given that the methodological toolbox provided by critical discourses studies is apt for studying social change, Sweden provides a particular interesting case considering its transformation from being perhaps the most equal country in the world by the turn of the 1980's towards having more dollar billionaires per capita than any other country in the European Union. The analysis shows that the recontextualization of market-friendly discourses of competitiveness, meritocracy and 'responsible family capitalism' in the representation of the super-rich leaves them largely evaluated according to norms compatible with ideals of market justice. While the super-rich are occasionally subjected to criticism, the critique leans towards criticizing the consumption habits or moral hypocrisy of individual billionaires rather than providing emancipatory alternatives to challenge instances of social injustice. As such, despite traces of ambivalence in the reporting, the discursive representation of the super-rich in the studied material gravitates towards mitigating rather than intensifying the normative contradictions of neoliberal capitalism.

A Space to Debate Socialist Feminism: Mediating Conflict Through Serialised Letter-Writing in Second Wave Feminist Periodicals

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During the British Women's Liberation Movement between 1970-90, feminist periodicals acted as discursive, woman-controlled forums through which to debate and negotiate difficult political discussions. Using the following list of socialist and Marxist feminist periodicals as primary source material, this paper provides insights into the role of print-based networks, and specifically the letter-to-the-editor pages, in facilitating the mediation of contentious political and interpersonal feminist conflict: · Red Rag: A Magazine of Women's Liberation (1972-80) · Scarlet Women: Newsletter of the Socialist Current in the Women's Liberation Movement (1976-82) · Link: Communist Party Women's Journal (1973-84) · Women's Voice (1973-81) By applying the framework of dialectic materialism in socialist Gracie Lyon's 1976 guidelines Constructive Criticism, this paper reveals how the material form of the periodical enabled good-faith negotiations concerned asking whether it was possible to 'separate the Marxist and feminist criteria for change, recombine them, and finally, in the new juxtaposition, discover a more satisfying solution?' when the end of the 1970s ushered in a new era of socioeconomic conservatism in the UK. While the independently run Red Rag and Scarlet Women periodicals provided a space for carving out a socialist feminist politic by mediating underlying divisions between women, Link and Women's Voice were more editorially limited by the aims of their governing political organisations. Additionally, social network analysis visualisations are used to map the traceable progression of political disagreements in letter-to-the-editor pages and evidence how the means of communication can enable the generation of feminist theory by giving space to ideological conflict. This paper concludes with observations about how disagreement and contradiction about the Marxist and socialist feminist position was mediated by serialised correspondence and, in turn, shows how the periodical form became a site of the commons by actively inviting women's participation in the formulation of feminism through – not in spite of – debate.

Rethinking digital labour – critical political economy of labour issue in media studies

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A number of important topics, themes and concepts frequently recur in studies of digital labour in the past decade, such as exploitation, precarity, unpaid labour, gig economy and platform labour. Concepts of immaterial, affective, and creative labour have been widely prevalent. The first generation of the critique has drawn on a variety of Marxist, post-structuralist and Weberian sources to question prevailing neo-liberal and centrist models centred on values of efficiency and the supposed empowerment of workers and users. While these topics, themes and concepts have been beneficial in establishing a basis for critique, there is a danger that, they may become rather familiar and in some cases potentially even a little stale. Therefore, this paper suggests a need to renew the critique of digital labour, as the digital realm stabilizes around a set of key global players and platforms and as labour activists continue to face serious obstacles to success in an era of authoritarian populism. Here, I concentrate on exploring a renewed critique moving beyond a dichotomy of exploitation and labour agency. Further, I encourage different disciplines – including but not limited to labour relations, economics, policy studies, sociology of work, critical management, organization studies, and communication studies – to enrich and renew studies of digital labour.

Summary