

Navigating Algorithmic Society

Book of abstracts



30 October

Young audiences, content and repertoires (11.15-13.00, MB503)

The TikTok Generation: Young People's Tactics for Navigating Information in Times of Uncertainty

Andreas Widholm, Stockholm University, Rebecca Bengtsson Lundin, Södertörn University, Torbjörn Rolandsson, Roskilde University

Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have become dominant gateways to news and information for young people. In an algorithmically curated environment, where entertainment, personal expression, journalism, and disinformation are deeply entangled, the boundaries between credible and misleading content are increasingly blurred. This raises urgent questions about how young people engage with, interpret, and respond to information in everyday life, particularly in situations characterised by high uncertainty. This paper presents the outline of a new research project: "The TikTok generation: Young people's media consumption in an era of digital disinformation". The project explores how young users navigate TikTok's information flow and how they develop tactics to assess trustworthiness and construct a sense of epistemic security during times of uncertainty. The project consists of three interconnected studies: (a) content analyses of TikTok's information environment during major news events to identify influential actors, the nature of the information they spread, and the platform affordances that enable viral spreadability; (b) focus group interviews and media diaries to examine news use as a situated practice shaped by both platform affordances and users' navigation tactics; and (c) interviews with legacy media organizations, focusing specifically on the development of new editorial strategies to reach young audiences, and how journalism is adapted to the affordances and algorithmic logics of TikTok and other platforms. "The TikTok Generation" is a research project supported by the Hamrin Foundation and carried out in cooperation with the Institute for Media Studies in Sweden. The aim is both to advance the scholarly understanding of how young people consume media and evaluate information credibility, and to strengthen the conditions for professional journalism within digital information environments primarily inhabited by young people.

Evaluating authenticity in online media content after AI: A qualitative study of young people in Norway

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This paper analyses navigation of authenticity in online media content, drawing on a three-step qualitative study. We ask: How do young people assess the authenticity of media content they encounter in their online feeds? How do they negotiate meanings of authenticity, and are these negotiations changing with the growing attention to AI? Our study is conducted at a time when increased attention to artificial intelligence (AI) has intensified long-running debates on mediated authenticity. Beerends & Aydin (2024) argue that AI could reshape authenticity criteria, making what is algorithmically familiar feel more real. As users navigate across digital platforms in a datafied media landscape, the mere potential of AI could inflict doubt, ultimately about the media's ability to reflect a shared reality. We draw on theories on *mediated authenticity* (Enli, 2015) as both a social contract between media and users and an evaluation practice users take part in, combined with heuristics (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013; Ou et al., 2024). Research indicates that people rarely conduct elaborate fact-checking (Tandoc et al., 2018, Gehrke et al., 2024), instead relying on cues. Methodologically, we conducted a qualitative study with 15 young Norwegians (aged 16-25), starting with individual interviews on uses of online feed-based platforms. Next, participants submitted examples of media content that they wondered might be AI-generated. Finally, participants formed focus groups to discuss these examples with peers and a researcher. Our design captures what sorts of content young people feel doubtful about or associate with AI, situating experiences within a social context. Early findings suggest that authenticity evaluations are shaped by social and aesthetic heuristics, expressed as intuition ("feels like AI") or as social validation (eg. checking comments). Typical examples of AI-suspected content include entertainment videos and advertising, which some express concern about while others claim indifference. The notion of authenticity as a contract appears weakened, in place of a more dynamic negotiation of what authenticity is and how much it matters in different contexts, indicating a shifting epistemology of authenticity.

Between Bans and Belonging: Changing Media Repertoires Among Russian-Speaking Youth in Latvia Amid the War in Ukraine

Emma Rönngren, Örebro University

The war in Ukraine has not only reshaped geopolitical dynamics but also transformed national media environments, particularly in countries like Latvia, where Russian state media and platforms such as VKontakte were banned following the invasion. This study explores how these developments have affected the news consumption practices of young Russian speakers in Latvia, a linguistically and culturally complex group historically connected to Russian-language media. Drawing on qualitative focus groups and individual follow-up interviews conducted between 2021 and 2022, spanning the lead-up to and immediate aftermath of the invasion, the research examines how young audiences responded to the sudden unavailability of familiar platforms and narratives. The study reveals how participants reconfigured their media repertoires in the face of bans and censorship, turning to alternatives such as YouTube, Telegram, and international news outlets. These shifts are not merely technological but also deeply social and affective. A key finding is the emergence of pronounced intergenerational tensions: while young people increasingly rely on social media and Western platforms for news, many of their parents remain loyal to Russian state television. These divergent habits have led to household conflicts and fragmented interpretations of the war, highlighting how media practices are entangled with identity, belonging, and trust. This study contributes to audience and reception research by demonstrating how war, regulation, and digital infrastructure intersect to reshape media habits. It emphasizes the agency of young Russian-speaking audiences as they navigate an increasingly polarized and constrained media environment with both pragmatism and emotional investment. The Latvian context underscores the importance of considering linguistic minorities and national policy shifts when examining audience behaviour in times of conflict.

Young people and algorithms: Profiling learning contexts and diversity concerns

Maria José Brites, Teresa Sofia Castro, Margarida Maneta, Lusófona University

This presentation seeks to reflect on how young people perceive the challenges posed by algorithms and filter bubbles in the digital age, focusing in particular on how they define and navigate these mechanisms in their daily lives (Swart, 2021). As part of a funded research project on youth, news and digital citizenship, 42 semi-structured and participatory interviews were conducted with young people aged 15-24 living in Portugal (F=21; M=21). The research questions were: Q1 - What knowledge do they have about algorithms? Q2 - How did they acquire this knowledge? Preliminary results show four different profiles. Profile 1 includes those who see the algorithm as an ethereal entity, endowed with human-like decision-making capabilities, and often associate it with misinformation. Profile 2 includes young people who recognise the complexity of algorithms, ranging from basic knowledge acquired informally to a complete lack of awareness. Profile 3 evidence young people who have never heard about algorithms. Profile 4 consists of participants who perceive algorithms in an essentially negative way, seeing them as a threat to diversity due to their perceived 'selfish' selectivity. This last profile includes individuals who value algorithmic personalisation and support individual autonomy, while recognising the importance of diversity. These findings resonate with the theoretical contributions of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, particularly Stuart Hall's (2005/1973) work on the social construction of culture and the processes of encoding and decoding media messages. Media messages are interpreted differently depending on the socio-cultural background of the individual, as it is also identified in the results (Bourdieu, 1983). The diversity of profiles observed illustrates how young people actively interpret and negotiate the meanings attached to the invisible presence of algorithms in their lives. Richard Hoggart's (1960/1957) reflections are also relevant, particularly his analysis of everyday culture and informal learning. Just as Hoggart (1960/1957) highlighted localised, non-institutional forms of knowledge, this study also shows that algorithmic learning often occurs outside formal educational settings - through family, peers or individual exploration - contributing to fragmented and unequal digital citizenship. These early findings underline the challenges facing contemporary democratic societies, particularly in developing critical awareness among young people in an information ecosystem deeply shaped by algorithmic mediation. The emergence of self-centred learning practices reflects an understanding of identity that challenges collective models and points to new forms of digital socialisation in an increasingly globalised world.

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Resisting algorithms (11.15-13.00, MA432)

Reframing Algorithmic Bias: The Power of User Agency

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Social media platforms have profoundly reshaped access to information, modes of socialization, and identity construction (van Dijck, Poell, & De Waal, 2019). With the expansion of natural language technologies and algorithmic systems, these platforms no longer serve merely as intermediaries, but rather act as active socio-technical agents capable of reinforcing stereotypical representations and influencing social practices (Airoidi, 2022). On the one hand, their commercial ownership and profit-driven logic often subordinate public interest,

further exacerbating the systemic reproduction of social inequalities. On the other hand, users' actions play a constitutive role in shaping digital environments through data production, with the potential to challenge and subvert these power structures (Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018; Gross, 2023). These dynamics continue to raise critical questions about how users navigate, negotiate, and reconfigure bias, algorithmic visibility, and exclusion in their everyday media practices. In light of these premises, this paper presents findings from a national research project conducted in Italy, which combines insights from a systematic literature review (Page et al., 2021) with qualitative data collected through media user focus groups. The analysis reveals a limited critical awareness of algorithmic mechanisms, as well as considerable variability in how participants interpret algorithmic discrimination and engage in strategies of negotiation or resistance. These practices are shaped by users' sociocultural positioning and their diverse levels of media literacy. Drawing on recent research on the "everyday control of algorithms" (Shen et al., 2020), this study explores users' agency within algorithmic systems, offering new insights into how individuals actively contest and shape these technologies. It reflects on how bottom-up practices may contribute to more inclusive and equitable digital environments within contemporary socio-technical ecosystems. Furthermore, by integrating empirical findings and theoretical reflection, this research proposes a multidimensional socio-technical framework and a set of definitional guidelines. These aim to promote participatory auditing practices and a situated conception of fairness, reimagining algorithmic systems not as mere reproductions of social inequalities, but as potential instruments of socio-political transformation.

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A Struggle for Algorithmic Repair of Imagined Intergenerational Violence: A Study of Migrant-Background Youth Outside Employment and Education in Norway

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In an increasingly digitalized society where algorithms shape the flow of information and our navigation of both social life and global events, awareness of algorithmic power is critical—particularly regarding how such systems can reproduce or intensify social exclusion. Research has shown that individuals' algorithmic literacy varies widely, with many developing personal assumptions about how algorithmic systems work (Gruber & Hargittai, 2023; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). These understandings directly influence how users interact with platforms and access digital services. For individuals from marginalized backgrounds, this can further compound digital inequalities and deepen existing forms of exclusion (Brites et al., 2024; Helsper, 2021). This study aims to contribute to better understanding of the relationship between social exclusion and algorithmic literacy by focusing on youth with migrant backgrounds in Norway who are currently not in education, employment, or training (NEET). These young people often face intersecting challenges, including low completion rates of secondary education, socioeconomic challenges and *weak social support* —factors that

contribute to their overrepresentation in NEET statistics in Norway (Fyhn et al., 2021). Grounded in care ethics as critical political theory (FitzGerald, 2022) and feminist relational theory (Koggel et al., 2022), the study understands these youth as relationally constituted - relationships that are shaped by overlapping systems of oppression, including patriarchy, racism and colonialism. Within this framework, the paper investigates how migrant-background youth in NEET-situations perceive algorithms on the digital platforms they use daily. Insights are drawn from interviews with 25 young individuals (ages 16–29). The paper argues that these youth engage in a form of a struggle for *algorithmic repair*: an affective and political labor of grappling with the imagined and remembered intergenerational violence; a continuous struggle to interpret, navigate, and reshape algorithmic environments in order to maintain and transform imagined violence across geopolitical lines.

Training the Algorithm: Ambivalences in everyday engagements with feminisms on Instagram Stories

Sofia Caldeira, Lusófona University

In platformed societies, algorithms have emerged not as neutral technical infrastructures but as potent political actors that actively destabilize information ecologies. This paper interrogates the algorithmic architectures underpinning contemporary social media platforms and their entanglement with the proliferation of information disorders—misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Grounded in critical algorithm studies, media sociology, and recent cross-European audience research, the study analyzes how algorithmic systems prioritize affective resonance and engagement metrics over epistemic integrity. Through a mixed-methods approach combining critical discourse analysis of platform governance documents with qualitative audience interviews, the research traces how algorithmic amplification fosters ideological polarization, emotional manipulation, and epistemic fragmentation across diverse publics. Findings reveal that while platforms frame algorithmic personalization as enhancing user experience, the underlying logics of visibility, virality, and profit systematically erode conditions for informed democratic participation. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of information disorders across socio-economic, cultural, and national contexts calls for a decolonized and intersectional understanding of algorithmic governance. The paper argues that confronting the deepening crisis of public knowledge requires not only technical interventions around algorithmic transparency and accountability but also critical media literacy initiatives that address the political economy of platform capitalism. By foregrounding the constitutive role of algorithms in contemporary information disorders, this work contributes to theoretical debates about agency, power, and resistance in the algorithmic society, and calls for urgent reimaginations of digital publics beyond the logics of extraction and control.

Digital Maturity in an Algorithmic Society: Everyday Practices of Navigation and Disconnection among Young People

Anamarija Šiša, Tanja Oblak Črnič, Katja Koren Ošljak, University of Ljubljana

This paper explores how young people in Slovenia navigate life in an algorithmically mediated society. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative research from the Digital Maturity of Youth project — which focuses on the social needs and informal education of young people in the digital age — we examine the experiences, needs, and everyday tactics of young people in relation to digital technologies, media platforms, and information practices. The empirical material is based on an extensive survey of secondary school students and young adults conducted between 2024 and 2025. Additionally, 15 remote semi-structured focus groups were conducted with 41 participants aged 16–24 from a range of socioeconomic, geographical, and educational backgrounds. Statistical analysis was employed to introduce and further explore the concept of digital maturity, with the aim of presenting its key dimensions. These include the autonomous and self-fulfilling use of technology, the ability to solve digital challenges, and the capacity to establish responsible interactions with others (Laaber et al., 2023). By examining issues faced by young people, their readiness for digitalisation, perceived vulnerabilities, overuse of digital technologies, and strategies for disconnection, core themes relating to digital needs and their

associations with dimensions of digital maturity were identified. The empirical section of the paper presents levels of digital maturity and the factors that inhibit or promote it in two samples of young people: 1,612 secondary school students and 579 young adults. The study then focuses on identifying vulnerable and empowered categories of young people based on selected social and cultural distinctions between them, and on identifying strong and weak levels of digital maturity. The findings show that young people feel simultaneously empowered and constrained by digital platforms. They recognise a generational advantage in solving digital problems, yet they are also critical of their overdependence on social media. While the data reveal the dangers of 'screen addiction', this study rejects the stigmatising label, instead emphasising the structural demands of constant connectivity. Their strategies for digital disconnection, which are practices of self-regulation and everyday resistance, are particularly notable in relation to distinctions concerning cultural and digital capital. We argue that young people are not simply naïve digital natives or disillusioned cynics, but active negotiators of their algorithmic environments. Their strategies highlight the burdens of individualised responsibility and the potential for agency within platform-dominated ecologies. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to shift the focus away from the harmful uses of technology and address the knowledge gap surrounding the so-called 'mature uses', while also shedding light on the contexts and factors that significantly impact the digital maturity levels of young individuals.

Algorithmic literacy and trust (11.15-13.00, MA217)

An Exploratory Study of University Students' Media and Information Literacy in Navigating Propaganda in Everyday Life

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With the rise of modern digital technologies and information infrastructures, the dissemination of vast amounts of information has been greatly amplified, leading to widespread exposure to propaganda. Propaganda refers to manipulative communication designed to promote and disseminate ideas, theses, and conceptions, aiming to influence and even alter individuals' opinions, attitudes, or behaviors (O'Shaughnessy, 2004; Vlăduțescu, 2014). Given the pervasive nature of propaganda, it is essential to examine how individuals navigate propaganda as part of their media and information literacy in everyday life. In this context, this study aims to explore university students' engagement with perceived propaganda, with a particular focus on how they recognize, interpret, and respond to propaganda in a daily setting. This investigation is situated within a theoretical framework grounded in the concepts of cognitive authority (Wilson, 1983) and media and information literacy (Frau-Meigs, 2023). By combining diary method and in-depth interview, participants were recruited to maintain a diary over one week, recording any instances they identified as propaganda encountered in their daily lives. Following the diary-keeping phase, each participant participated in a semi-structured interview, during which they shared the examples they had collected and reflected further on their experiences and interpretations. Preliminary findings, based on the thematic coding analysis of the data, highlight three key perspectives: (1) Participants' definitions of propaganda were diverse, extending beyond political content; (2) Most participants did not intentionally identify propaganda each time they encountered information; (3) Those who did identify propaganda primarily relied on their prior knowledge and cross-referenced information with trusted or authoritative media sources. Such an investigation can contribute to a deeper understanding of media and information literacy, critical thinking development, and the broader resilience of democratic societies against manipulative information practices. References Frau-Meigs, D. (2023). Media and information literacy. Report, Paper commissioned for the 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report, Technology in education. Document code: ED/GEMR/MRT/2023/P1/06. France: UNESCO. O'Shaughnessy, N. (2004). *Politics and Propaganda: Weapons of Mass Seduction*, Manchester University Press. Vlăduțescu, Ș. (2014). Communicational types of propaganda. *International letters of social and humanistic sciences*, (22), 41-49. Wilson P. (1983). *Second Hand Knowledge: An Inquiry into Cognitive Authority*, Greenwood, Westport, CT.

Trust in the Feed: How Everyday Audiences Believe Information on Social Media Platforms

Fatma Ozen, York University

In recent years, platforms like YouTube and Instagram have become central information hubs for millions of users navigating everyday life. From understanding current events and health advice to fixing household appliances or learning social skills, audiences increasingly rely on content creators and influencers instead of traditional experts or institutions. This paper explores how users come to believe and trust what they see and hear on these platforms, focusing on the micro-practices through which knowledge is authenticated in algorithmically curated environments. Drawing on digital ethnography and audience reception studies, as well as the work of scholars such as Taina Bucher and Alice Marwick, this research investigates the ways audiences assess credibility in a media landscape where formal credentials are often secondary to perceived authenticity, emotional relatability, and visual aesthetics. In contrast to media literacy models that emphasize critical scrutiny and fact-checking, this paper highlights how belief is often shaped through affective engagements: the creator's tone, the perceived consistency of their persona, peer comments, and even the platform's interface design. Parasocial relationships and habitual exposure further entrench trust, creating feedback loops that can both inform and misinform. By situating these dynamics within broader questions of platform governance, algorithmic visibility, and everyday media use, the paper contributes to current debates on audience agency, platform epistemology, and the reconfiguration of trust in digital society. Ultimately, it argues that understanding how belief is constructed through platforms is essential not only for media scholars but also for addressing the deeper cultural shifts in how authority and truth are negotiated today.

Algorithmic Literacy: Navigating TikTok Creators' Algorithmic Strategies

Gemma Gómez-Bernal, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Fernanda Pires de Sa, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Celina Navarro, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Gemma San Cornelio, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

TikTok has transformed user-generated content and sparked discussions about the algorithms that govern content visibility and interaction. Characterised by its sophisticated algorithm-driven content curation, it influences the content users consume, create and share. This research is an outcome of the project "Perception and knowledge generation about personalization algorithms in digital communication platforms (ALCOM)" (PID2023-148682OA-I00) funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. This project analyses the perception and algorithmic awareness of young adults (18 to 35 years old) when using digital platforms. In this presentation, we focus on data related to TikTok with the primary objective of analyzing how users and creators understand its recommendation algorithms and explore the narratives surrounding algorithmic governance. We focus on platform data and three semi-structured interviews with creators regarding their content creation processes and their experiences with the TikTok algorithm. The platform sample comprises N=2.308 videos (1.202 in Spanish and 1.106 in English) and has been analysed through a thematic and text analysis using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques. Preliminary results indicate that discussions about TikTok's algorithm focus on three intertwined types of strategies: 1) informal learning; 2) growth; and 3) personification. The informal learning strategies primarily come from creators trying to understand and explain the TikTok algorithm mechanics, updates, and its perceived impact on content creation and personal branding. Growth strategies and tips are also frequently shared, with creators presenting methods to maximize their reach and engagement. Personification strategies occur when users describe the algorithm with human-like characteristics and agency as an entity to be pleased, decoded, outwitted or even befriended, which can act as a gatekeeper or provide opportunities. In conclusion, this study highlights the discourses of TikTok creators and their algorithm imaginaries, which influence the informal learning and competences of audiences to navigate personalization systems.

From Bots to Ballots: Public Concerns About AI Manipulation in Elections

Annika Bergström, University of Gothenburg

Recent advancements in generative AI systems have enabled the production of original text, audio, and visuals, creating realistic outputs. Concerns are raised about AI being manipulative of public opinion and electoral outcomes. It is not clear that average users are aware of the presence of AI applications or can distinguish a bot from human activity. In fact, our knowledge about how citizens perceive the risk of AI and disinformation is quite limited to date. This project focuses on AI perceptions in relation to political information. Based on a random, representative sample of the Swedish population, anxiety for disinformation from AI in elections was measured. Previous research has shown that socio-demographic factors, ideological orientation and own experience have been associated with different kinds of internet concern. In this study these factors are tested against each other. Preliminary bivariate analysis shows that age and ideological leaning seem to be the strongest predictors of anxiety for disinformation from AI in elections. Multivariate regression analysis confirms this. Older people are significantly more anxious than younger, the shift occurs in the late 30s. People to the left are more anxious than people to the right, and people who are not taking an ideological position. Weaker associations are found for sex – women are more anxious than men – and online habits – people with none or less regular habits are less anxious than people with frequent habits. Education, satisfaction with democracy, trust in public authorities, and assessment of societal development do not have an independent impact on anxiety for disinformation from AI in elections. With generative AI available for a couple of years now, and used only by a small part of the population, the perceptions seem to follow well-known diffusion patterns combined with an ideological dimension.

Platform politics: communities and conflicts (13.45-15.30, MA432)

Navigating Media Materiality: Audience understanding of media and their environmental impact

Tereza Pavlickova, London College of Communication

This paper adopts a people-centric perspective to explore audiences' media practices in relation to climate change and sustainability. The role of media in relation to climate change is contradictory and complex. While media serves as a crucial tool for raising awareness about climate change, with research examining media representations of the phenomenon (Zemanek, 2022) or viewing media as a potential technological solution (Covils et al., 2021), they simultaneously contribute to environmental degradation through their material impact (e.g., Brodie and Velkova, 2021; Marks et al., 2021) and unsustainable business models driven by economic gains rather than environmental priorities. Audience perspectives are explored in terms of consumption and interpretation of these media representations, while audiencecentric approaches to the material impact of media are much scarcer (Kannengießner, 2019). The central question of this paper is how people negotiate their use of media in relation to the urgency of climate change. It focuses on people's understanding of both climate change and sustainability, alongside their uses and perceptions of media's role in these issues. The research draws on data from in-depth interviews with respondents who self-identify as environmentally conscious and active in sustainable everyday practices. Media use is understood here as an interpretative act (Pavlickova and Kleut, 2016; Picone et al., 2019). The analysis, situated within the body of work exploring people's understandings and imaginaries of media technologies (i.e., algorithms) (Mathieu and Pavlickova, 2017; Bucher, 2019; Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021), examines both the understanding and coping strategies of media users as they negotiate their perceptions of media as a solution and/or a contributor to climate change. The analysis provides further insight into people's technological dependencies in the environmental context, negotiating the need for media to stay informed while identifying unsustainable practices and potentially leading to the consideration of (partial) media disconnection.

Death in Real Time: Emotional Politics, War Voyeurism and the Mediatization of Contemporary Conflicts

Barbara Orzeł, University of Silesia in Katowice

This paper examines the evolving aesthetics and politics of war reporting in the digital era, particularly emphasising the emotional regimes underpinning the visual representation of conflict. Using case studies from the wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip, the presentation explores how professional and amateur footage—often captured by soldiers and disseminated via social media—shapes public perception through affective contagion and real-time immersion mechanisms. The analysis underscores how mainstream media curate conflict narratives (through gatekeeping, framing, and agenda-setting) by amplifying selected frames that stimulate fear, compassion, or patriotism while omitting broader geopolitical contexts. This selective dramaturgy, fueled by infotainment logic and the commercial imperatives of audience retention, transforms death into a spectacle, embedding it within the cultural circuits of memory and trauma. The paper engages with media voyeurism and the convergence of war imagery with gaming aesthetics (e.g., POV-style combat videos echoing first-person shooters), highlighting the implications of such overlaps for audience desensitisation and moral disengagement. One of the most important issues is the epistemological crisis induced by post-truth environments, in which deepfakes and fake news erode the credibility of both victims' testimonies and journalistic integrity. Finally, the discussion probes the ethical limits of witnessing in a hypermediated reality where the omnipresence of war imagery demands a rethinking of the relationship between truth, affect, and responsibility. Are we witnessing the rise of an “aesthetic of plausible violence” that prioritises emotional resonance over factual coherence? How do platforms, algorithms, and virality reconfigure the function of media as a historical actor in times of war? This paper invites a critical reassessment of the media's role in shaping the experience of contemporary conflict—not only as narrators of violence but also as participants in the spectacle of war.

Algorithmic Infrastructures and the Production of Information Disorders: A Critical Analysis of Platformed Publics

Hatice Çağlar, Çukurova University

In platformed societies, algorithms have emerged not as neutral technical infrastructures but as potent political actors that actively destabilize information ecologies. This paper interrogates the algorithmic architectures underpinning contemporary social media platforms and their entanglement with the proliferation of information disorders—misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation. Grounded in critical algorithm studies, media sociology, and recent cross-European audience research, the study analyzes how algorithmic systems prioritize affective resonance and engagement metrics over epistemic integrity. Through a mixed-methods approach combining critical discourse analysis of platform governance documents with qualitative audience interviews, the research traces how algorithmic amplification fosters ideological polarization, emotional manipulation, and epistemic fragmentation across diverse publics. Findings reveal that while platforms frame algorithmic personalization as enhancing user experience, the underlying logics of visibility, virality, and profit systematically erode conditions for informed democratic participation. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of information disorders across socio-economic, cultural, and national contexts calls for a decolonized and intersectional understanding of algorithmic governance. The paper argues that confronting the deepening crisis of public knowledge requires not only technical interventions around algorithmic transparency and accountability but also critical media literacy initiatives that address the political economy of platform capitalism. By foregrounding the constitutive role of algorithms in contemporary information disorders, this work contributes to theoretical debates about agency, power, and resistance in the algorithmic society, and calls for urgent reimaginations of digital publics beyond the logics of extraction and control.

Fans of Fandom: Platformed Fan Identity in Tumblr's Goncharov Phenomenon

Ahuja Chahna, KU Leuven

In contemporary digital fandoms, the relationship between fans and media industries is in flux. Digital fandoms are shaped not only by the texts they engage with but also by the platforms they inhabit. Fans exist in a liminal space, simultaneously occupying mainstream positions yet remaining subordinate to the authorial power of media producers and the algorithmic control of social media platforms. This paper examines, Goncharov, a spontaneous collaborative storytelling phenomenon that emerged on Tumblr in 2022, as a case study for how fans create meaning and community within and in response to the affordances and culture of platformed life. As a playful parafandom centered around a nonexistent film with no established authorship, Goncharov raises a critical question: if fans in digital culture are not fans of 'texts' and their 'authors', what are they fans of? This paper uses critical discourse analysis at the intersection of platform and fan studies to explore how the framework of 'playfulness' within Tumblr's platform architecture and fandom culture can help theorize Goncharov as a fan-created, collectively authored, ever-shifting text that disrupts the traditional author-text hierarchy in fan practices. The Goncharov fandom illustrates that fan identity in digital fandoms has shifted from the shared pleasure of 'texts' and their 'authors' to shared pleasure in affective experiences of online fan activities. Ultimately, the Goncharov phenomenon prompts a reconsideration of fan identity in platformed societies by demonstrating that fans in digital culture are neither fans of the 'author' nor the 'text' but fans of digital fandom culture.

Understanding and imagining algorithms (13.45-15.30, MA433)

Lived and imagined digital vulnerabilities- Parents understandings of AI and algorithms through news use

Niverdita Chatterjee, Ranjana Das, Maria-Nerina Boursinou, University of Surrey

Drawing on three waves of in-depth interviews with 30 parents of children aged 0-18 from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, based in England, this paper highlights the intersection of lived and imagined digital vulnerabilities. This paper conceptualises digital vulnerabilities by focusing on parents' perceptions of AI and algorithms shaped by their everyday news use, influencing their parental strategies, anxieties and concerns. In the current literature, vulnerability has been theorised as an inevitable yet intersectional human condition (Chisty et al., 2021) or a state that is situational, temporal and spatial (Kuran et al., 2020). Whereas digital vulnerability as a concept remains ambiguous, as the susceptibility to risk in digital context is attributed to diverse factors like level of awareness of users (Sachdeva and Mitra, 2025), the platform affordances, its policies and governance (Di Paola and Calo, 2024; Guingrich and Graziano, 2023), the positionality of the user (Carcelén-García et al., 2023), the situational and geographical context (McKay and Macintosh, 2024). However, there is a gap in conceptualising digital vulnerability, particularly in relation to how users such as parents perceive and navigate the contemporary AI-dominated datafied society to access trustworthy and credible news. This paper addresses the gap based on a longitudinal qualitative study that explores parents' news use in England. The study investigates how they navigate news and perceive truth, trust, responsibility, and risk in today's media-saturated societies. The findings reveal 1) resilience and critical competencies as safeguarding strategies based on their lived experiences of navigating the AI-driven datafied society to access trustworthy and credible information, and 2) their fears, concerns and hopes for their children and the society as they imagined the evolution of AI and algorithms in future. Hence, the paper emphasises the importance of understanding the intersection of lived and imagined vulnerabilities by taking a user-centric lens to define digital vulnerability in a constantly evolving digital landscape.

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Youth perceptions of data commodification, imaginaries, and cultural meanings of Algorithms

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In digital ecosystems, adolescents both interact with platforms and become subjects of algorithmic data collection (Bucher, 2018). How, then, do they interpret algorithms—and the mediated world shaped by them? This presentation investigates everyday algorithmic reflections from 15- to 19-year-olds (N=21; 11 girls and 10 boys), living in Portugal, anchored in a triangulated theoretical approach to deepen empirical analysis. Data were collected through ethically approved, in-depth Zoom interviews (Brites et al., 2024), with participatory and performative contexts (Mathieu & Brites, 2014) The analysis draws on the commodification of youth as active agents (Buckingham, 2011), the concept of algorithmic imaginaries (Bucher, 2016, 2018), and the circuit of culture model (du Gay et al., 1997). Buckingham highlights how youth are positioned as active consumers in digital ecosystems, where attention, content production, and social interactions are commodified. Bucher's notion of algorithmic imaginary explains how users, including adolescents, interpret opaque algorithmic processes without technical expertise. The circuit of culture model offers a framework for mapping the cultural meanings surrounding digital practices across production, representation, identity, regulation, and consumption. Participants' narratives revealed a spectrum of algorithmic literacy and agency. Some demonstrated critical awareness—recognising filter bubbles, algorithmic manipulation, and developing resistance strategies—while others adopted a passive “laissez-faire” acceptance of personalisation. Statements such as “They appear on Instagram and that's it.” (Henrique, 15) and “I started to educate the algorithm.” (Gabriel, 17) illustrate these contrasting positions. Youth engagement with algorithms transcends technical understanding, encompassing affective perceptions, adaptive behaviours, and critical negotiation strategies. These findings underscore the urgent need to better understand how young people navigate, contest, and reshape algorithmically mediated realities.

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Algorithmic imaginaries: definition and future directions

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Over the last years, algorithms have become increasingly central interaction partners for audiences to engage with content and navigate media platforms. The notion of the algorithmic imaginary (Bucher, 2017) has emerged as a crucial concept in these debates, sensitizing scholars for audiences' ways of "thinking about what algorithms are, what they should be, how they function and what these imaginations in turn make possible" (Bucher, 2017, p. 40). In this paper, we present the results of a literature review that traces how the concept of the algorithmic imaginary has been deployed and evolved. At its core, we contrast the sensitising nature of the "algorithmic imaginary" from more definitive concepts such as "mental models", "folk theories", or "algorithm literacy". Based on our review, we showcase how the concept has enabled flourishing scholarship mapping the grounds where algorithms and audiences meet online, particularly in embodied, affective, and pragmatic terms. At the same time, we conclude that the concept holds unrealised potential, specifically by guiding our attention to the socio-historical context of audiences' ways of thinking about algorithms. More specifically, we will discuss this potential in relation to (a) personal biographies of media use, (b) forms of collective sense-making, and (c) larger structures of feelings that ground audiences' imaginations of algorithms. Across these dimensions, we argue, the concept of the algorithmic imaginary does not just allow us to conceive the grounds where algorithms and users meet, but also enables us to unpack contemporary audiencing dynamics, i.e., the process in which people become positioned as audiences in their content engagement activity.

Two Platforms, Two Realities? Audience Tactics and Everyday Sense-Making on Rednote and Weibo in China's Algorithmic Society

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Over the past decade, the Great Firewall has profoundly shaped the China's digital landscape, cutting Chinese citizens off from global platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Within this isolated but vibrant domestic digital environment, social media platforms have become central to how individuals perceive their world and maintain social connections. This paper explores the distinct cultures and user practices emerging on two prominent Chinese platforms, Weibo and Rednote, both of which operate under common political pressures and algorithmic control yet foster markedly different experiences of communication and social interaction. Drawing on platform analysis and observations of cross-platform discourse, this research seeks to uncover how the distinct design principles and algorithmic logics of Rednote and Weibo shape everyday user tactics in understanding and navigating their social worlds. Rednote, with its visually driven content, emotionally resonant narratives, and aspirational lifestyle focus, has experienced further evolution following the influx of "TikTok refugees" after TikTok's US ban. These users have introduced fresh participatory dynamics and global aesthetics, subtly transforming the platform's cultural and expressive possibilities. Conversely, Weibo remains a predominantly text-based and politically oriented platform, characterised by passive consumption, careful expression, and a significant presence of state-driven information flows. Here, content is frequently fragmented and repackaged by sophisticated algorithmic filtering, leading to constrained modes of user engagement. Significantly, this study also highlights the nuanced dynamics of cross-platform engagement, examining how users strategically shift their expression between these two digital environments. Through this comparative analysis, the paper seeks to move beyond simplistic binaries of resistance and compliance, illuminating instead how algorithmic systems structure not just content visibility, but the very emotional and social fabric of everyday digital life.

Making sense of transmedia storytelling: a reception study with Portuguese young people

Pedro Moura, Sara Pereira, University of Minho

The development of fictional worlds using multiple media, which is the core principle of transmedia storytelling (TS), has been presented by Jenkins (2008) as the main aesthetic manifestation of convergence culture. TS would not only exemplify a further, more integrated development of the long-established practice within the cultural industries of exploiting successful intellectual properties, but it would also illustrate the increased visibility and value of niche reception practices in times of audience fragmentation. That is, fans (the ones that were deeply productive, part of knowledge communities) and their well-established practices of consuming, creating and navigating through different texts, making sense of this dispersion of stories and paratexts related to a given fictional world, would not only become a more valuable market for the cultural industries, but were also envisioned by the author (Jenkins, 2008) as capable of paving the way for other audiences to deal with narrative dispersion. To this day, this kind of highly visible/productive fans remain the starting point to many reception studies on TS (García-Rapp, 2021). However, this paper addresses more diverse types of audience: it focuses on the attitudes and practices of self-declared fans, non-fans, and even anti-fans towards TS (Gray, 2003). Based on data from two surveys (N=417) and 21 semi-directed individual interviews with Portuguese adolescents aged 12-18 years, it shows a general recurrence and preference for consuming different media extensions of a popular fictional world, but scarce practices of enunciative and textual productivity (Fiske, 1992), contradicting the expectations of convergence culture. The most committed fans distinguished themselves from other audiences of TS through semiotic productivity (Fiske, 1992) and lurking: that is, in this overall scenario of relative familiarity with TS extensions, the hardcore-fans of the samples had a deeper knowledge of the diegesis at stake, partly due to their listening practices in online communities.

Algorithms and news journalism (13.45-15.30, MA443)

Individual, material, social, and temporal dimensions of news relevance

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News media compete with each other and other forms of media for people's attention. In this competitive environment, news media are expected to cover relevant stories in society and be relevant for their users. Decision-making regarding relevance takes place in the everyday editorial work of choosing, prioritizing, and curating news stories, but increasingly relevance assessments are automatized through, for instance, recommender systems connecting people with content by measures of personal relevance (Karimi et al., 2018). What constitutes relevance in these systems is, however, often taken for granted. The aims of this research is to add to the current literature detailing the concept of news relevance from audience perspectives (Bengtsson, 2023; Schrøder, 2019). Similar to Bengtsson, we draw on phenomenological sociology (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schutz, 2011) to analyze news readers ways to determine relevance. Our study is grounded in five workshops involving 37 Danish news readers of a Danish tabloid news outlet. The workshops included 1) interpersonal interviews where participants demonstrated ways to navigate and select news, 2) evaluation of personalized recommendations based on users' behavioral data captured in a two-week period leading up to the workshops, and 3) group discussions about the implications of news recommender systems. The data material is analyzed by four dimensions affecting relevance judgements: Individual, material, social, and temporal dimensions. Analysis based on these dimensions shows that relevance is not merely judged by personal interests, but also broader social or societal interests, compulsions, timing, and preferences for formats. Moreover, the dimensions are not mutually exclusive and often considered in relation to each other (see table 1). These findings, however trivial they might sound, speak to a broader socio-technical discussion concerning news personalization. These demonstrate that news selection is not merely a pursuit of

individual interest but also about following popular events beyond one's interests for social purposes, selecting formats that fit routines, and simply just entering content that captures attention through their persuasive presentation. These are assessments that are made tacitly in the interaction with the news site. The multiplicity of the concept of relevance is important to consider in editorial discussions of relevance, as well as in understanding how recommender systems capture these dimensions through behavioral measures.

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Tactics to Cope with “Toxic” News: A Sequential Mixed-Methods Study

Pauljan Truyens, Sarah Vis, Ike Picone, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Audiences' news attitudes have shifted markedly—interest has waned, trust has eroded, and many report feeling fatigued or actively avoiding the news (Newman et al., 2024). One key driver of this negative stance may be perceptions of toxicity within the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2017). Although “toxicity” remains under-defined, it generally refers to content that audiences perceive as harmful or damaging (Matthew et al., 2022). Recent work on Flemish audiences shows that many perceive today's news environment as increasingly toxic and in response narrowed their news repertoires (Truyens et al., forthcoming). Previous research indicates that, for instance, some media users perceived the negativity and overload of news during the COVID-19 pandemic as toxic to the point of rethinking and narrowing their news repertoires (Vandenplas et al., 2021). Strategies to cope with this toxicity include curation tactics (Vis & Picone, 2024) (such as relying on trusted sources and filtering keywords), and positive-news integration (such as deliberately seeking uplifting or solution-oriented stories to balance negativity). This study adopts a sequential mixed-methods design to explore (1) how audiences perceive news toxicity, (2) how perceived toxicity builds up to a “tipping point” that leads them to alter the constellation of their news repertoire, and (3) which tactics they develop to cope with persisting instances of toxic news. To this end, we first conducted in-depth interviews with 20 Flemish citizens to elicit their perceptions of toxicity and the tactics they use to cope with it. Next, participants donated their socialmedia data via a data-mirroring protocol (Jurg et al., 2025). Finally, we conducted follow-up interviews to integrate self-reported tactics with patterns observed in the donated data. This combined approach allows us both to pinpoint the moment participants judge the news landscape “too toxic” and to unpack the reasoning and tactics underpinning their reactions.

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Credible by design? Studying the effects of news recommender system design on users’ perceptions of news relevance and credibility

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Today, digital platforms are among the most important gateways to news, enabling news organizations and aggregators to tailor news distribution to individual users. The use of news recommender systems (NRS)—automated systems that suggest news content based on user data—has been increasing (e.g., Blassnig et al., 2024), and their design has been shown to influence the ways in which people engage with and perceive of the news (Beam, 2014; Joris et al., 2024). This study specifically focuses on the influence of users’ epistemic agency—in this case, the extent to which users are informed about and allowed to control the workings of NRS—on their perceptions of the news itself. Building on research which found that NRS can nudge users towards specific news consumption patterns, and that users of NRS are, generally, aware of their agency (Moeller et al., 2023), this study asks if NRS design choices that are not explicitly content-related translate into users’ perceptions of the quality of the news. To examine the ways in which NRS design can impact users’ perceptions of news credibility and relevance, this paper builds on a comparative between-subjects experimental design in Belgium and Switzerland. To this end, an online survey was fielded in April 2025 targeting representative samples of the adult population in Belgium ($n=1,500$) and Switzerland ($n=1,500$). Respondents were shown a simulated news recommender interface with five news items. The interfaces were manipulated to show varying levels of transparency (none, feed-level or item-level transparency) and user control (none, option to turn off algorithmic recommendations). Increased levels of transparency and user control in the NRS interface are hypothesized to lead to higher perceived news credibility and higher perceived news relevance, potentially guiding future NRS design to improve user trust and news consumption experiences.

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Generative AI and the Uncanny Valley: Audience Affective Responses to Synthetic News Content

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The increasing use of generative AI tools in journalism raises critical questions about the automation of news production and its impact on audience trust and perception. To better understand this phenomenon, this study revisits the concept of the Uncanny Valley, which suggests that entities that appear almost human, but lack fundamental human traits, can provoke discomfort or unease in observers (Mori, 1970; Wang et al., 2015). We argue that a similar affective boundary emerges when audiences engage with AI-generated news, particularly as automation challenges normative expectations of human authorship in journalism. This exploratory study is based on a literature review and theoretical proposal, deriving on discussions from human-machine communication (Guzman, 2018) and empirical studies on audience acceptance of synthetic news (Clerwall, 2014; Graefe et al., 2016; Gilardi et al., 2025; Yeste-Piquer, 2025). We identify several clusters of affective responses shaped by factors such as familiarity, perceived authenticity, content quality, trustworthiness, and the disclosure of AI authorship. Contextualized within recent industry developments and case studies (Borchart et al., 2024; Caswell, 2024; Couraceiro et al., 2025; Newman & Cherubini, 2025), we argue that these affective boundaries resonate with the metaphor of the Uncanny Valley, as AI-generated news content must “cross” the valley of discomfort to achieve broader public acceptance. Overall, this study contributes to the debate on media automation by extending the Uncanny Valley framework to audience reactions towards AI-generated news. While generative AI applications in journalism may be autonomous enough to operate unsupervised, it remains too opaque and fallible to be trusted.

Algorithms Against Avoidance: Bridging the Gap Between Users and News Through Recommender System Design

Michelle Kulig University of Fribourg, Willem Buyens, University of Antwerpen, Steve Paulussen, University of Antwerpen

The digital transformation of the public sphere (Habermas, 2022) has reshaped news consumption through algorithm-driven personalization, boosting content relevance while raising concerns about polarization, bias, and reduced public-interest content. Social media, now a major news source, prioritizes entertainment and socializing, which nudges users toward unintentional news avoidance, while intentional avoidance grows due to overload, negative well-being effects, and declining media trust, amongst others (Newman et al., 2023). These trends threaten political knowledge, civic engagement, and media sustainability (Fitzpatrick, 2022), fueling an “epistemic crisis” that weakens democratic discourse (Dahlgren, 2018). To tackle these challenges, we apply the “Epistemic Welfare” framework (Authors, forthcoming), which focuses on enhancing epistemic agency through capabilities (e.g., digital literacy) and conditions (e.g., infrastructure). Evaluating recommender systems, as part of this infrastructure, through the epistemic standards of Reliability, Power, Fecundity, Speed, and Efficiency (Goldman, 1987) enables assessing if they disseminate true information (Reliability), to every question or interest (Power), for many (Fecundity), quickly (Speed), and with minimal costs (Efficiency). Systems designed to meet these standards could reduce news avoidance by responding to the underlying causes for users’ disengagement from the news. To investigate whether users’ (and specifically news avoiders’) preferences for recommender system design align with epistemic standards, our study assessed their system evaluations, design preferences, media trust and news consumption/avoidance patterns through cross-sectional representative surveys in Belgium and Switzerland, conducted in April 2025 with 1,500 respondents per country. We hypothesize that news avoiders will favor recommender system designs that address the causes of their avoidance and enhance agency (i.e., transparency and control). Preferences for these standards likely vary by media type (news vs. entertainment) and provider (public vs. private). Our findings will inform the development of recommender systems and AI governance, aligning them with user needs and tackling news avoidance in the context of the epistemic crisis.

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31 October

Algorithmic technologies and user practices (11.15-13.00, MB503)

Poles, Points, and Platforms: The Gamified and Platformised Outdoor Adventure

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This paper explores how people navigate the platformisation and gamification of outdoor adventure within the context of everyday life and cultures of self-optimisation. Platforms and digitalisation have dramatically increased access to the outdoors and nature through digital maps, activity platforms, social media, etc. (Romero Dexeus, 2019). While gamification is recommended to strengthen motivation and enhance experiences in tourism and outdoor activities (Xu et al., 2013), its application is contested. For example, affordances of the apps and devices may stimulate behaviour adverse to health and nature experiences (Arts et al., 2021; Beames & Maher, 2025), app-based point collection may lead to stress and ambivalence about public health outcomes (Vikene et al., 2023), and gamification may promote a consumptive view of nature (Altrudi, 2020). The paper focuses on Stolpejakten [The Pole Hunt], a free activity project in Norway, run by local organizers, and sponsored by public and private organizations. It stimulates people to visit “poles” in various areas: “We aim to activate both young and old, regardless of functional ability”*, claims the website. Among the sponsorships promoted on the site, a caption reads “Collect points, achievements and badges. Climb the leaderboards and scoreboards!”* The paper examines how apps, gamification, and social media are synergistically applied to promote public health and encourage nature engagement. The research asks: How are outdoor activities gamified and platformised through Stolpejakten? How do people experience and express these appbased activities, and what are the tensions? The study uses a multi-sited ethnographic approach combining: a. Walkthrough of the app, website, and social media page b. Observation of participants in the field and field dialogues based on site visits c. Observation of participants’ posts in a Facebook group The paper contributes to discussions about the platformisation of everyday life, drawing insights from media and communication studies and outdoor adventure research.

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Employing creative trails as pedagogical media to initiate university students in media studies to the concept of civic engagement through the exploration of hidden issues within marginalised community

Monsak Chaiveeradech, Thammasat University

Employing creative trails as pedagogical media to initiate university students in media studies to the concept of civic engagement through the exploration of hidden issues within marginalised community. This project enables university students in the media classroom to explore community's issues surrounding the university by using design thinking concept to develop six creative trails for investigating the community's issues. The process of creative trails' prototype development was cultivated students to learn into six steps: first, Discussion: students are encouraged to critically discuss and make assumptions about stereotypical representations of the community, through the news, searching keywords from social media, prior to engaging in fieldwork. Second, Investigation: conducting fieldwork to collect data through interviews with community members, taking pictures and recording clips, mapping local routes, and identifying key issues encountered within the community. Third, Clarification: the data collected from fieldwork are analysed to assess the alignment between initial assumptions and on-the-ground realities, with particular attention to the challenges faced by community members, in order to identify and select a specific issue for communication. Forth, Ideation and Prototype: at this stage, each group selected a specific issue to communicate and designed a creative trail that enables outsiders to explore the community through the lens of the curated pathway. Fifth, Testing: all six creative trails are opened for public participation through a call for participants to join the community exploration. Students make a sequence for the route, data collection process, and evaluation methods to assess whether the designed trails effectively achieve their intended objectives. And lastly, Reflection: Insights gathered from participant observations and evaluations during the activity were discussed and analysed to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the creative trails. At this stage, students engaged in reflective dialogue, sharing perspectives based on their direct experiences and active participation in the project. This implementation of creative trails fosters participatory engagement among three key stakeholder groups: community members, university students, and external participants involved in guided explorations. This pedagogical approach facilitates experiential learning by challenging preconceived assumptions and fostering the co-construction of alternative perspectives. In particular, it encourages cross-group dialogue and interaction that enables the reframing of hidden issues, for example, wastewater and solid waste disposal, narrow pedestrian walkway, vulnerable groups. The occurrence of community issues cannot be originated solely within the community itself, but rather stems from multiple dimensions rooted in broader social structural contexts.

How platforms are shaping the discoverability of media: the case of Russian alternative media

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The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia has significantly impacted the ability of alternative media to report fairly on the situation in the country, pushing nearly all of them into exile. To engage with their audiences and especially inside Russia these media outlets rely on various global platforms and their algorithms. There are two kind of restrictions they are dealing with, which impact more this ability: legal restrictions and infrastructural ones.

- Legal restrictions are shaping the ability of alternative media to work openly in Russia and report about it and they are already transformed Russian public sphere into "digital authoritarian one" (Daucé, Loveluck, Musiani, 2025).

- Infrastructural restrictions are related with technological blockages significantly limiting the ability of alternative voices to be heard: Facebook, Instagram, X are blocked on territory of Russia while YouTube is slowed down. That transform the transborder communication into a new “iron curtain” (Yablokov, Gatov, 2025) isolating Russian technological infrastructure from the rest of the world (Bronnikova et al, 2025). At the same time platforms themselves are shrinking the ability of alternative media to be heard due to voluntary restrictions against Russian users.

In such circumstances the concept of discoverability (by which we understand the way platforms coordinate the experiences of content discovery on the audience side (McKelvey and Hunt, 2019)) is the better way to describe how platforms shape Russian alternative voices to be heard and consequently how its impact the way they are covering events in Russia risking to lose objectivity (Dovbysh, Rodina, 2025). This paper aims to examine this discoverability of Russian alternative voices across platforms. Using a series of in-depth interviews and a politico-economic analysis, we demonstrate that these media outlets often resist purely algorithmic model of visibility by combining it with “traditional” methods of journalistic outreach: email newsletters, messaging apps, and the development of their own applications designed to bypass Russian government censorship.

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The space of smartphone uses: A Bourdieusian study on how social inequalities shape gender and age divides in smartphone practices

Johan Lindell Uppsala University, André Jansson Karlstad University, Elvira Oberger, Uppsala University

This study presents an exploratory approach to the analysis of social differences in smartphone use. Previous research has predominantly focused on problematic smartphone use and addiction. By contrast, this study turns to the research programme of Pierre Bourdieu to forward a sociological study on social differentiation in how people use their smartphones. Using multiple correspondence analysis of Swedish survey data (n = 2401) the study explores the structure of the “space of smartphone uses”. This space is built around two main oppositions: high vs. low volumes of smartphone use in general on the one hand, and more vs. less legitimized uses as well as publicly vs. privately oriented uses on the other. While age and gender remain key factors in explaining how people position themselves in this space, we show that cultural capital, economic capital and habitus shape these differences. Privileged social positions tend to “push” social agents towards more frequent and legitimized smartphone uses. We find that social inequalities shape smartphone uses, particularly among older generations.

Methodologies and meta perspectives (11.15-13.00, MA434)

Studying the audience in the age of algorithms

Amparo Huertas-Bailén, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Luiz Peres Garzezi, Universidade da Coruña, Ana González-Neira, Universidade da Coruña

Methodological discussion never ends in front of the continued development of algorithms as content curators. This text arises from the literature review of a qualitative research project funded by the Spanish government on the monitoring of current political events by young people (PID2021-125032OB-I00), and our goal is to contribute to this debate. The algorithmic epistemology classifies the individual into predictive consumer categories (algorithmically imagined audiences) and rejects social ascription to understand the audience's behavior. Livingstone (2019) alerted that a study based solely on algorithms generates partial and decontextualized information, but this warning has hardly been heeded. We have found two prominent lines of research: one investigates how algorithms work (how they are built, trained, and adjusted), and the other, which is the one we are interested in, focuses on user behavior. Nevertheless, studies based on the data generated by algorithms stand out. Platformization has transformed the relationship between information and news with the audience (extreme personalized consumption, algorithmic biases, interconnection between users, ephemeral loyalty to influencers, incidental news exposure, anti-preference consumption, etc.), leaving the door open to misinformation. After the birth of TikTok, the problem has gotten worse. Gerbaudo (2024) identifies the passing from social networks to social interest clusters, where virality (banality and superficiality) is more important than the number of followers of content creators. This may mean consolidating a vertical communication strategy, shifting from a people-centered audience to an item-centered one. However, we know very little about how users perceive it (algorithmic experience) and react (power of resistance). Technology must not be analyzed in isolation, as its associated problems are also social. If researchers want to understand consumption patterns, empirical works with samples of people are also needed (Hendricks, 2024). Communication researchers, just like legacy media, face new challenges.

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Data Mirroring: A methodological framework for data-donation based interviews in media user research

Sarah Vis, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Daniël Jurg, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, David Mathieu, Roskilde University

We propose data mirroring as a novel methodological framework for integrating social media data donations (Data Download Packages) into qualitative interview research. Building on the concept of the "data mirror" (Mahnke et al., 2024), which captures the feedback loops between users and their digital platform data, our methodological framework provides theoretical grounding and practical guidelines for 'mirroring' DDPs back to users. Since the introduction of Article 15 of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

in 2018, social media platforms are required to make user data accessible, enabling researchers to collect DDPs via data donations for academic purposes (Van Driel et al., 2022). While existing literature has largely focused on using DDPs for large-scale, aggregate-level data (Araujo et al., 2022), their potential for exploring complex micro-level user-media relationships within datafied environments remains underdeveloped. Based on empirical evidence of 64 data mirroring interviews, we demonstrate how DDPs can function as prompts, context and reflections in qualitative interviews. Using an illustrative case study on Instagram engagement with news about the Israel-Palestine conflict, we show how data mirroring fosters participants' reflection on their algorithmic media environments and information flows over time. The data mirroring method draws on traditions of elicitation interviewing in audience research (Barton, 2015), positioning the interview as a co-interpretative and reflexive process. By centering users' perspectives and promoting reflexivity, data mirroring answers to a growing call for methodological innovation in studying audience engagement on algorithmic platforms (Gomez Ortega et al., 2023). It offers a practical and ethical way to study platform use in a datafied environment. Finally, we present an open-source tool that transforms raw DDPs into accessible visualizations, enabling both researchers and participants to engage meaningfully with the data.

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Interventionist approach to study audience engagement with and sense-making of datafied journalism

Liisa Ovaska, Tampere University

Audience scholars studying users' relationships with datafied and algorithmic systems face the methodological challenge of studying these opaque systems and users' experiences with them. Consequently, many scholars have employed various methodological tactics, such as vignettes and scenarios (Das et al., 2024), visualizations (Taylor et al., 2023), or trust scales (Mathieu and Møller Hartley, 2021) ie. stimuli to help participants to elucidate their experiences. Drawing inspiration from these studies, this paper presents a qualitative longitudinal interventionist audience research approach. This approach aims to first make participants aware of the studied subject and then collect their evaluations: A researcher intervenes in participants' lives, provides examples and tasks of the studied issue to elicit their evaluations and real-life experiences. The interventionist approach has been utilized in my doctoral thesis, where I studied news users' reflections on datafied journalism, i.e., journalism to which they contribute with their data. Although user data is widely utilized in journalism production, news users may be unfamiliar with its features. To uncover participants' experiences with this, an interventionist research approach is necessary. In my study, involving 21 active readers of the Finnish tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat*, I employed various methods, such as quiz surveys to introduce the issue, focus group interviews for collective sense-making regarding front-page personalization, and one-week-long instant messaging group chats to prompt participants to pay attention to distinctive features of datafied journalism when consuming news, such as headlines or topic choices, and share their observations with the group. Finally,

1.5 years after the initial participation, 18 out of the original participants took part in individual follow-up interviews to evaluate the first research phase. This paper will be part of the methodology chapter of my dissertation and, hopefully, someday a methodological article. At the conference, I hope to present and further develop my arguments for the interventionist research approach.

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Digital orientation: A navigational turn in audience research

David Mathieu, Roskilde University

This paper argues that the field of audience research is currently witnessing a “navigational turn”. In making this argument, my objective is to initiate a reflection on how the field has changed over the past decades, decidedly moving away from questions of reception towards questions of orientation or navigation. In general term, this navigational turn is a response to changes in the media landscape that follow from its digitalization and datafication – or what Hepp calls “deep mediatization” (2020) – but especially a response to the increasing challenges these changes create for audiences (Ytre-Arne & Das, 2020). While making these observations, I ask whether and how geographical metaphors can prove useful to the field of audience research in order to better understand these navigational challenges and the ways audiences respond to them. In this paper, I will first *take note* of this shift by presenting recent strands of research that express concerns for issues of navigation, such as research on news avoidance (Schrøder & Ørsten, 2016), disconnection (Lomborg & Ytre-Arne, 2021) or digital detox (Syvertsen, 2020), research on news or media repertoire (Swart et al., 2017; Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017; Schrøder, 2011), as well as a research on trust, (dis)information and coping tactics (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2024; Hartley-Møller & Schwartz, 2020; Mathieu & Schwartz, 2023). Second, I will *take stock*: drawing on ideas within the phenomenology of social geography, such as orientation, wayfinding and signposting (Ingold, 2015, 2007; Moores, 2018), I will illustrate the usefulness of these geographical metaphors for audience research. Third, drawing on my own research, I will *take steps* towards presenting what a navigational turn in audience research looks like in the context of the datafication of media and audiences.

Navigating platform power (11.15-13.00, MA443)

How need- and norm-based motives for digital communication mitigate the chilling effects of dataveillance

Sarah Daoust-Braun, Noemi Festic, Michael Latzer, University of Zurich

Perceiving dataveillance – the pervasive collection and analysis of digital traces – as salient can increase internet users’ sense of dataveillance and expectations of negative consequences from digital communication, leading to self-inhibited internet use. This process, known as *chilling effects*, can limit participation in today’s digital society, where being online is a need and a norm. Given these potential consequences, the conditions under which chilling effects hold require empirical attention. This study investigates whether need- and norm-based motives for digital communication mitigate chilling effects – the negative effects of a heightened sense

of dataveillance on digital communication – when searching for information, expressing opinions, and disclosing personal information. Drawing on uses and gratifications (U&G) and social norms research, we argue that users are motivated to engage in digital communication based on felt needs and perceived norms, reducing their susceptibility to chilling effects. Based on survey data from a representative sample of Swiss-German internet users ($N_{total} = 898$), we conducted mediation and moderation analyses with observed variables using the *lavaan* package in R. Controlling for privacy concerns and sociodemographics, preliminary results revealed that higher perceived salience of dataveillance (driving one's sense of dataveillance) and expected negative consequences from digital communication were significantly associated with self-inhibition in response to a sense of dataveillance in the mediation models. These results support the core chilling effects hypothesis, although perceived salience was not associated with self-inhibition of opinion expression. Contrary to expectations, need- and norm-based motives did not negatively moderate the relationship between each independent variable (perceived salience, expectations of negative consequences) and self-inhibition, suggesting the robustness of chilling effects. This novel work advances our understanding of chilling effects and offers representative evidence aligning with its theoretical mechanisms. Despite motives to engage in digital communication, an increased sense of dataveillance remains a significant determinant of self-inhibited internet use.

The surveillance survival paradox: Experiences and imaginaries of surveillance in a generational and cross-cultural perspective

Göran Bolin, Södertörn University, Rita Figueiras, Universidade Cattólica Portuguesa, Veronika Kalmus, University of Tartu

Most previous studies on online surveillance have been conducted in long-time liberal democracies with limited experiences of explicit and intrusive state surveillance. This paper explores the role of the historical legacy of totalitarianism or authoritarianism, embodied in generational experiences and mindsets, in the formation of imaginaries of, and attitudes toward, contemporary state and corporate surveillance/dataveillance. We propose a theoretical hypothesis of the “surveillance survival paradox”: personal experiences of the past (totalitarian/authoritarian) surveillance regime do not lead to a greater fear or criticism of the contemporary regime; rather on the contrary. The paper presents results from an original mixed-method study combining a quantitative online survey ($N=3,221$) with focus group and individual interviews (71 participants), conducted among two generations (born in 1946–1953, and in 1988–1995) in three European countries with different historical surveillance regimes (Estonia, Portugal, and Sweden). The quantitative analysis revealed significant cross-cultural differences in personal and mediated experiences of surveillance. Inter-generational differences in attitudes toward contemporary surveillance were surprisingly similar across the countries, with the older groups in all countries demonstrating higher tolerance toward online state surveillance, and the younger groups reporting higher acceptance for corporate dataveillance. The qualitative analysis revealed that perceptions of the past surveillance regime as more direct and dangerous overshadow sensitivities toward more abstract and covert risks related to the extended state and corporate surveillance in the contemporary datafied world. The results led us to formulate the “surveillance survival paradox” as a generation-specific, and probably also country- or regime-specific, phenomenon.

Redefining Digital Resilience: Towards a Conceptual Framework of Digital Resilience in the Era of Large Language Models

Kiran Kappeler, Semahat Ece Elbeyi, University of Copenhagen

The recent proliferation of conversation-based large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT or Copilot entails challenges for everyday life that are related to their anthropomorphic character (Bender et al., 2021; Natale, 2021), such as information integrity and the reproduction of biases (Crawford, 2021; D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020, Thylstrup et al., 2021), as well as dependency and (over-)reliance (Laestadius et al., 2022). This paper argues that to deal with these challenges, individuals need “digital resilience” (Shandilya et al., 2024), a

concept, which so far remains understudied (Tomkova, 2020). We conceptualize “digital resilience” in relation to digital literacy or skills, which research has identified as essential for thriving in our digital and algorithmic society (Hargittai & Micheli, 2019). Our research question asks: How can digital resilience be conceptually defined and integrated within digital literacy for the interaction with conversation-based LLMs? Based on psychology, which defines “resilience” as the dynamic and evolving process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult life experiences (Chmitorz et al., 2018; Southwick et al., 2014), we identify central elements of digital resilience including awareness of AI-generated content, critical thinking, fact-checking abilities, as well as self-efficacy. We emphasize individual agency as fundamental to digital resilience, highlighting how these capacities enable people to not merely overcome vulnerabilities emanated from AI systems but to actively thrive when interacting with LLMs. By exploring digital resilience regarding everyday challenges associated with LLMs from a critical normative perspective, this article offers a framework for future research on adaptive strategies in increasingly AI-mediated environments.

Tactics, deviations, and “gambiarra”: distinct uses of the Barbie Selfie Generator by the audiences

Márcia Zanin Feliciani Viviane Borelli, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM)

Barbie Selfie Generator was a tool released by Warner in 2023 to promote the movie Barbie. It was launched together with the movie posters, allowing users to create their own versions of them. Its launch generated a wave of pink, blue, and glitter on media platforms, with millions of people turning themselves into Barbies. But not only the uses predicted by the tool were visible. Especially in Brazil, known for its intense meme production – as discussed by Borelli and Löfgren (2024) –, different applications of the Generator were identified. In fact, when the first posters’ appropriations came, the Generator had not yet been released. At that moment, users were reproducing the posters with the help of Designers, who replied the aesthetic and shared editable archives on Photoshop. We interpret this as an example of “gambiarra”, a Brazilian concept related to a way of “solving problems purely immediate and pragmatic” (Messias, 2020, p. 2). According to Messias (2020, p. 2), “gambiarra” may be understood as a “vector of sociotechnical processes, an emerging mediation moved by precarity”. Like said, even with the existence of the Generator – the official guidance to the posters’ reproduction, if not a means of controlling it –, users’ applications were different from predicted – which was to talk about themselves, either through their professions or personal characteristics. Dialoguing with Scolari (2018), we understand these differences as deviant uses. Scolari (2018, p. 86) summarizes them saying that “if the developer says ‘do what I say’, the users reply ‘we do what we want’”. According to the author, with time, this tends to lead to a coevolution between technologies and social actors. An example was the use of Generator to promote the movie Oppenheimer, which was in theaters together with Barbie. This is a very significant case, if we think that the two movies are from different studios and were disputing the audiences’ attention in the same period. But, more than seeing them as competitors, the public embraced the two of them, giving birth to “Barbenheimer” (Melo; Pimenta, 2023) – an interesting movement by the social actors, especially considering the differences between the two movies. To end this discussion, we dialogue with the concept of tactics (Certeau, 1998). They are applied by those who don’t have power, as an alternative to the strategies used by those who have it. From that, we can understand that the tactics are mostly employed by subordinated groups, as a form of bringing their fights to light. This was also visible with the Generator, with uses that discuss topics normally ignored by society and even by the movie, no matter how “for everyone” it tries to be (Byrnes; Loreck; May, 2024). Examples are bodies that are fat and/or don’t fit in traditional gender divisions. It’s these last uses that we intend to deepen in our dissertation research, understanding how a pop culture product is appropriated by activist collectives and individuals – as postulated by Verón (1997). By doing so, they convert the original market interests to their own, in a complexity characteristic of mediatization (Verón, 2014). To identify and study these movie uses, the concept of circulation (Braga, 2012; 2017) – and the marks that production and recognition leave on it (Verón, 2004) – is fundamental. References Borelli, V.; Löfgren, I. (2024). Around the world with the ‘truck patriot’: memetization and the circulation of laughter in the 2022 post-election period in Brazil. In L. Caffagni; I. Löfgren; G. Martins; P. Sartoretto (Orgs.), *The Planalto Riots: Making and Unmaking a Failed Coup in Brazil* (pp. 35-65). Institute of

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Online identities and communities (13.45-15.30, MA432)

Hungarian LGBTQ+ influencers under attacks by an illiberal regime: Activism and resistance on social media

Anna Zsbori, Loughborough University

On 14th April 2025, the Hungarian government passed the 15th amendment of the Fundamental Law to ban LGBTQ+ gatherings (Kassam, 2025), which sparked several protests across the country. Earlier this year, a YouTube music video created by a Hungarian rapper reached 20 million views in 2 months, in a country with less than 10 million residents, portraying a dictator who is rapping, 'We grew bigger and bigger as a congregation, All I had to do was bash the gays' (Majoros & Elek, my translation). The video has been characterised as a thinly-veiled satire of the Hungarian government (Németh, 2025), simultaneously offering commentary on Hungary's government propaganda while demonstrating the power of social media to fight back. This paper examines the significant value of social media for the LGBTQ+ people in illiberal environments, where Public Service Media (PSM) are in the hands of anti-LGBTQ+ elites. The LGBTQ+ community in Hungary has been under various attacks by the government over the last few years (Kottasová, 2021). However, Hungarian LGBTQ+ citizens' digital media usage has been mainly overlooked by scholars, as current academic accounts explore queer communities' social media usage predominantly focused on the West (Duguay, 2016). This work addresses these gaps in current research by analysing in-depth interviews conducted with prominent Hungarian LGBTQ+ influencers while employing concepts such as power, resistance (Foucault, 1978), master (Delanty, 2006) and counter narratives (Meretoja, 2021), and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This paper argues that the main drive behind their activism is to create a counter narrative that challenges the omnipresent PSM propaganda, each doing so in their own specific way in order to resist the regime. As a result, this work offers unique contributions to audience, LGBTQ+, communication, and media studies, as well as political science.

"I love it when a plan comes together". User reactions to J. K. Rowling's gloating over the UK Supreme Court's ruling on sex and gender

Anne Jerslev, Nete Nørgaard Kristensen, University of Copenhagen

In recent years star author J. K. Rowling has stirred much attention and polarized communities by publicly sharing her views on gender. She has been accused of transphobia and been publicly scandalized by large groups of commenters and Harry Potter fandoms (Ravell, 2023; Schott 2023), regarding her interventions as transgressions of moral values (Thompson, 2000). The ongoing 'scandal' has been nourished by recurring posts

from Rowling, vehemently defending her viewpoints about biological sex as defining of gender. Most recently, she on X vociferously and in a visually striking manner welcomed the UK Supreme Court's ruling of 16 April 2025, concerning the interpretation of the Equality Act 2010 that the legal definition of woman is based on biological sex. Rowling has continuously denied making transphobic statements, yet her outspoken public comments have caused highly polarized and personalized public reactions online (Zulli, 2021): She has been regarded as a traitor by fans of the Harry Potter universe and accused of being a hater of trans women by diverse groups of cancelling-eager (Ng, 2022) opponents. But she has also been hailed as a proponent of common sense and a defender of women's rights. In this paper we examine how user reactions have contributed to the intricate and contested cultural complex surrounding Rowling. We perform a qualitative content analysis of user comments on X to Rowling's "self-scandalizing" tweet following the UK Supreme Court's ruling. We combine scandal and celebrity theory, drawing especially on the concept of intentional 'self-scandalization', which designates a (public) persona's deliberate, repeated strategy of "producing a controversy about a transgression" of norms for targeted users (Haller, 2015, 440). Such self-scandalizing performances thrive in a digital media context. They often polarize along cultural and politicized trenches and use humor, sarcasm and memetic communication as affective drivers of engagement (Jerslev, Kristensen & Menke, 2025; Zulli, 2021). We aim at answering the question in which ways users on social media confer meaning to Rowling's persona as a highly visible author celebrity, her public and contested defence of the rights of women as defined by biological sex, and the moral world of the Harry Potter books and films. We discuss how affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015) challenge and support Rowling's public performance – her firm and indisputable trust in her own beliefs as a powerful celebrity, writer and proponent of women's rights. We argue that the polarizations, uniting the popular cultural and gender politicized fields, are enacted across a struggle of ownership, not only of the interpretation of what gender means but also of Rowling's importance as celebrity, beloved author and public figure.

Selfies, Statements, and Strategy: Negotiating Political Identity and Representation in Social Media Practices.

Alice Bergholtz, Södertörn University

Politically active young people have grown up in a digital society unlike anything previous generations have experienced. In today's increasingly mediated and platformised public sphere, youth participation unfolds at the intersection of formal politics and everyday digital expression. Previous studies have shown that young people engaged in youth organisations often understand their participation as closely tied to their biographical trajectories, shaped by meaningful moments in their lifestories (Lüküslü, 2020). This paper explores how young people who act as representatives in political organisations negotiate their political identities within the broader context of their social media personas. Drawing on qualitative interviews (conducted as part of a PhD project) with politically engaged youth in European youth policy contexts, the paper shows how social media becomes not only a space for communication and mobilisation, but also a site for constructing and mediating ideas of being the "good representative." Participants describe how they reflect on *what*, *when*, and *how* to post political content, balancing authenticity, visibility, and the expectations of being a responsible political voice. This negotiation extends beyond political posts into broader notions of self-identity, suggesting that youth representatives experience their political persona as "always on." These practices bridge contemporary calls in audience studies for understanding political participation as situated, adaptive, and embodied (cf. Ekman & Amnå, 2012; Dahlgren, 2013; Theocharis & van Deth, 2017), and research on social media as a space for political expression (Boulianne, 2015; Robertson, 2015). By focusing on how political identities are created and maintained through digital practices, this study contributes to understanding how youth participation is reconfigured in today's entangled media landscape—and how complex it can be for those publicly expressing political engagement.

From algorithmic audiences to contentious publics. Mediated trajectories of politicisation among anti-war Russians

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The full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 signified a failure for the protest movement for democratisation that had attracted many young people in Russia. Following the outbreak of war, domestic repression and censorship gradually intensified, forcing many into exile. These actors, however, (re)organised anti-war contentious publics, through ongoing processes of interaction, renegotiating shared values and identities among groups and individuals across borders outside and inside Russia. Along with debates addressing datafication as an ontological and epistemological shift (Couldry and Hepp 2017), audience studies emphasise audience agency (Livingstone, 2019) which is able to act otherwise. How then, can we operationalise this analytical tension for understanding the process of publicity, despite the authoritarian context? This paper addresses these dilemmas through the analytical lens of ‘attention’ (Tufeksy, 2013; Tufekci, 2017), looking at how people navigate the attentive politics of platforms in order to engage with public issues under surveillance. Attention is approached holistically— not only as media-driven but also as reflecting broader social practices and imaginations, recognising how actors exercise collective agency on algorithmic agency (Trere and Bonini, 2024). By conducting 35 semi-structured interviews with Russian anti-war actors (activists and audiences), I explore how the algorithmically driven communication of platforms has been orchestrating politicisation, leading participants from mundane engagement towards contentious publicness (Kavada & Poell, 2021). The paper designates three main trajectories of such transitions when politicisation is 1) encompassed by media engagement and orchestrated by algorithms; 2) media technologies are utilised for proximity between physical and digital spaces and 3), media are used as organisational tools, contributing to group identity, by algorithmic logic. It is worth noting that these paths are not static or complete, but rather reflect trajectories of transformation in accordance with the broader political and social context in the country.

Algorithms and the temporalities of everyday life (13.45-15.30, MA433)

Slow pedagogy and compassion as institutional antidotes to families’ digital saturation?

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In times in which *intensive parenting* is perceived as cultural norm in Nordic welfare societies (Dannesboe et al., 2018), digitalized institutional communication with parents is a regular daily practice – for instance facilitated by the Danish platform Aula, which follows the child’s educational trajectory across both early childhood (EC) institutions and primary school. This seems to fall onto fertile grounds: According to Mascheroni (2020), parents have by and large normalized what can be termed a *digital surveillance culture*, using pregnancy and parenting apps, baby wearables, the Internet of Toys, etc. Parents are thus used to constantly monitor both their own and their children’s behaviors through digital means. Paradoxically, however, while parents feel the need to be available for institutional demands and online communication, this also interferes with their perception of an active life with children and of granting children’s present needs full attention – sometimes leading to (at least temporary) digital disconnection (Andelsman Alvarez, 2024). While in the school context, the Danish political discussion of how much children’s lives and learning should be digitally supported if not monitored currently leads to sweeping debates to what extent personal and institutional digital tools should be banned, the topic is less agitatedly discussed around EC institutions. In fact, some EC institutions respond to parents’ heightened digital ambivalences by emphasizing and further honing their analogue pedagogical profiles, while actively involving parents in (re)considering what a good life is, for the children, their families, as well as the community. The paper presents interview and observation material from a pilot with two Danish ECEC institutions that differently profile their pedagogical approaches as societal antidotes to

a digitally saturated lifestyle: one promoting slow pedagogy, the other a compassionate approach to sustainability.

TikTok Made Me Do It: Trend Rhythms and Everyday Interactions

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This contribution presents an empirical intervention designed to understand Danish teenagers' everyday use of TikTok, with a particular focus on the dynamics of trends. Guiding questions were: which types of content trend? why and how do users engage with trends? how long is a trend lifecycle? what is the balance between US-driven and local trends? The study delves into the fast-paced nature of TikTok trends, examining what makes them enjoyable and what interaction modes they afford, (consuming/creating/sharing/discussing). Additionally, it explores the strategies teenagers employ to stay up to date with the latest trends, and how trends migrate across apps. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines platform analysis of TikTok's affordances, aesthetic analysis of video genres, and empirical data collection through a Youth Panel consisting of 12 children aged 13 to 16. Over eight weeks, researchers conducted weekly check-ins with pairs of participants during school hours, involving qualitative interviews, screen time summaries, video donations of trends, and discussions about the participants' moods and reflections. This research contributes to the existing TikTok literature by aligning with studies on TikTok's affordances and cultures (Kaye & Quinn, 2021), and work on TikTok scrolling and consumption from a qualitative perspective (Schellewald, 2024a and 2024b). It also relates to the app's aesthetic and performative affordances (Wang, 2021), the conceptualization of TikTok as a playground (De Leyn, 2021), and the practices of content remix and re-use, as well as the dynamics of imitation (Zulli & Zulli, 2022). We seek to contribute to the literature about social media trends (Asur et al. 2011; Zhang et al. 2016), where trends are often underdefined or just equal risky practices (Killeen et al. 2025, Kriegel et al. 2021), in order to advance our understanding of how algorithmic media shape everyday practices and social cohesion.

Listened, felt, and shared: how users experience Spotify Wrapped as collective rhythms

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Towards the end of each calendar year, an ever-growing number of digital media users eagerly await the arrival of Spotify Wrapped (Bonini & Magaouda, 2024; Burgess et al., 2022). This personalised data compilation provides a retrospective summary of listening habits – most played song, top artists, favourite genre – which individuals are encouraged to share across their social networks. The ensuing engagement with Wrapped presents an appropriate case study of collective engagement where people's individual music tastes intersect with datafied practices. The unfolding narrative of Spotify Wrapped will be tracked through various stages and across multiple platforms with a mixed-method approach, mapping the user perspective from anticipation to creative engagement. The data includes a small-scale survey on the day of the release, collecting screenshots and motivations to share Spotify Wrapped 2024 results. Along with an analysis of user posts and Spotify marketing on various social media covering a time frame of pre- and post-event engagement. By examining people's reactions to Wrapped 2024 as a media event, the study will provide insights into practices and experiences related to digital entertainment media including digital ritual and algorithmic curation (Prey, 2018; Freeman, Gibbs and Nansen, 2022; Annabell and Rasmussen, 2024). Users' tactics associated with the anticipation and engagement of Spotify Wrapped are explored, where users discuss how they adapt their listening habits to shape the algorithm for a 'favourable' Wrapped summary. The study is informed by Lefebvre's Rhythmanalysis (2004) to analyse the unfolding engagement. Preliminary data collected indicates that engagement with Wrapped changes from increasing anticipation to active sharing on the day of the release, towards a phase of reflection. Consequently, rhythmanalysis – and the resulting collective social rhythms of everyday life – illuminates the role of platform-driven, datafied temporalities in shaping cultural engagement.

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Everyday Listening in a Platform Society

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The integration of sound-based media into everyday life has intensified with the ubiquity of smartphones, streaming services, and portable listening devices. Today, individuals engage with music, podcasts, and audiobooks not only for entertainment, but also as tools for regulating attention, emotions, and cognitive states in everyday contexts. This paper explores the role of audio media in everyday practices of self-regulation, focusing on how users incorporate platformized listening into routines, social interactions, and emotional management. It also examines listeners' awareness of algorithmic and commercial structures mediating access to and engagement with audio content. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 20 regular users of audio media, we ask: How do individuals experience and make sense of their listening practices in light of platform infrastructures? How do they negotiate, appropriate, or resist the logics embedded in algorithmic curation and platform governance? Theoretically, the paper engages with sociological perspectives on music (DeNora, 2001), platform studies (Poell et al., 2022), and affordance theory (Gibson, 1968), conceptualizing the relationships between human agency, technological affordances, and commercial infrastructures. By foregrounding the intersections between platform logics, mediated attention, and everyday listening, we seek to contribute to broader discussions on media consumption, the attention economy, and the sociotechnical shaping of contemporary life. While the past decade of research and public discourse on media use has largely focused on screen-based practices and social media, this study redirects attention to the sometimes overlooked role of audio media in shaping everyday engagement in a platformized society.

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Platform power and audience engagement (13.45-15.30, MA443)

Making Instagram Habitable: Ordinary Users and the Spatial Politics of Platform Power

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Instagram has transformed people's everyday lives, giving rise to phenomena such as influencers, Instagrammable aesthetics and the sharing of intimate and daily moments (Leaver et. al., 2020). While much research explores platform power, scholars have also highlighted how groups of users such as feminists, artists, activists, and vulnerable communities resist it (Gangneux, 2021; Nagel, 2018; Talvitie-Lamberg et al., 2024; Olszanowski, 2014; Witzenberger, 2018). Yet, such resistance is often overlooked (Chambers, 2017), and

studies on everyday users call for more attention to how the latter navigate this power (Caldeira et al., 2021). This study approaches Instagram as a digital place shaped by rigid strategies, drawing on Michel de Certeau's spatial theory, to explore how ordinary users employ invisible tactics to transform it into a space. Based on 15 in-depth interviews, the study reveals how users make Instagram habitable (see de Certeau, 1984) by abandoning parts of the platform, using the place based on their feelings, defying its "unspoken rules," playing with its materiality, and repurposing it for unexpected uses. This paper contributes to the existing literature by identifying categories of everyday practices that users develop even without having the intention to challenge the platform, but to make the online environment more livable for them. By identifying these patterns, the study sheds light on the invisible ways people reclaim agency. In addition, approaching Instagram through the spatial lens of place and space underscores how users constantly reshape the platform, revealing ongoing, invisible negotiations of power. At the same time, it highlights the struggles users face in making digital environments livable—especially as shifting platform regulations increasingly leave them unprotected (see Knibbs, 2025). The study calls for greater attention to these ordinary users who invisibly reclaim space for themselves.

Problems of Artificial Amplification? Tsargrad's Digital Cultures and Audience Engagement on VKontakte (VK) amid Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine

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Tsargrad Society¹ and its affiliated Tsargrad Television², funded by the Russian oligarch and ideological entrepreneur Konstantin Malofeev, demonstrated a growing follower base, citations, and user engagement after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Tsargrad television brands itself as an alternative online outlet and has a pronounced ideological affiliation with Russian nationalism, monarchism, imperialism, the political use of Orthodoxy, and the promotion of traditional family values. The current study sheds light on the digital cultures and audiences of Tsargrad television, as well as investigating their engagement on VK³ before and after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The paper assesses how Russian audience engagement patterns have changed between 2021 – 2023 and analyses their discourses about the war. Tsargrad television is an example of nationalist and alternative media production within an autocratic context, as nationalism serves as a tool for audience mobilization. A Python-based data scraping solution is programmed for collecting posts, engagement patterns, user comments, and hyperlinks to other sources between 2021 and 2023. Stark outliers and jumps in reactions were identified only after the 24th February 2022, as particular events or topics were amplified among users. The paper relates to subtopics such as algorithms, platforms, information disorder, and audience practices. It also reflects on the usage of non-human agents such as bots, boosting topics in VK's media ecologies. A more in-depth analysis of these posts demonstrates that they relate to the Russo-Ukrainian war and amplify particular Russian state narratives about Ukraine, NATO, and larger processes of constructing the notion of the enemy in times of war.

Deceit between falsehoods and morality: A comparative study of audience engagement with (Russian) disinformation in Poland, Serbia and Romania

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Although the bulk of research on mis- and disinformation remains concerned with its direct impact on citizen's beliefs and behaviour, scholars are increasingly acknowledging the need to pay more attention to citizen's perceptions of mis/disinformation as a phenomenon, as well as the ways in which these perceptions relate to their exposure to, and beliefs in, mis/disinformation (e.g. Newman et al. 2023; van der Meer and Hameleers 2024). A small but growing body of work has started exploring these issues drawing on qualitative methods, typically using focus groups or qualitative interviews (e.g. Hadlington et al. 2023, Hall et al. 2024, Kyriakidou et al. 2022, Martinez et al. 2023, Nielsen and Graves 2017, Szostek 2018, Rhyzova and Toepfl 2024, Valera Ordaz et al. 2022, Wagner and Boczkowski 2019, Wenzel 2019). This research offers valuable in-depth insights into

the meanings audiences associate with ‘disinformation’ and related terms, and the strategies they use to navigate an increasingly uncertain information environment. However, it largely abstains from investigating how these perceptions and strategies relate to the way audiences respond to and interpret material containing false or misleading information. To address this gap, this paper draws on 18 focus groups conducted between April and July 2025 in three European countries that are often seen as targets of Russian disinformation campaigns: Poland, Serbia and Romania. Six focus groups have been conducted in each setting, each comprising 6-8 participants on average and covering three different age groups. The protocol included questions about news consumption, prompts containing four ‘live’ examples of material designated as disinformation by local factcheckers (relating to two topics – the Russia/Ukraine war and LGBTQ+ rights), and questions about disinformation as a problem, its characteristics, origins and remedies. Focus groups were conducted in local languages and then transcribed, translated and analysed via NVivo/MaxQDA using thematic analysis. A key finding emerging from the analysis is the disjunction between people’s perceptions of disinformation as a problem and their actual modes of engagement with disinformation materials. Namely, while perceptions of disinformation and related phenomena were underpinned by a familiar juxtaposition of falsehoods and facts and resonated with policy and scholarly debates on the topic, disinformation materials were not always approached from the perspective of factual veracity. Instead, rather than asking whether a particular piece of information was factually accurate, several participants discussed it from the perspective of whether the broader subject matter was morally right. The primacy of the morality frame was particularly prominent in responses to LGBTQ+ disinformation but also arose in relation to examples linked to the Russia/Ukraine war.

For real or just an illusion (of inclusion)? Observing worldwide experiences of audience participation in journalism

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Audiences are central to journalism, not only from a commercial point a view. However, giving voice to citizens is not new in newsrooms, but this strategy is no stranger to criticism. From news avoidance (Edgerly, 2021) to some sort of disbelief in journalism (Knudsen et al., 2021), scholars have been studying this general strategy of including citizens in journalism, as some argued about peoples’ incivility (Bonaut et al., 2024), the pointlessness of this interaction (Moreno, 2006), or even define it as “dark participation” (Spyridou & Avraamidou, 2023). In this ongoing research project, a pivotal question is addressed, which are followed by others, as well: what kind of experiences of citizens’ participation in journalism have been published? Is there a pattern in these studies in terms of type of media or a geographical background? What can we learn from a worldwide approach into the study of metaphorically opening the media gates to the audiences’ intervention? Based on this research agenda, a systematic literature review has been conducted as to identify, measure and synthesize the research on a specific subject, save practitioners time and support evidence-based practice (Misaki et al., 2018; Koffel, 2015). The overall sample includes the most quoted articles featuring in the Scopus database, within the time frame 2015-2025. Preliminary results suggest that researchers tend to focus mainly in online media participatory formats, throughout a geographically non-concentred research agenda around the world, as the majority of journalists seem to undervalue these formats of participation.